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Sattari gets a glimpse of endemic butterflies

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ERI: A pair of endemic Southern Birdwing butterflies in mating posture has been photographed in Bhuipal by Suryakant Gaonkar.

The Southern Birdwing (*Troides Minos*) is a large and striking Swallowtail butterfly that is endemic to peninsular India and is seen mainly during the days after rainfall recedes. Villages of Sattari lying in the close vicinity of the Mhadei wildlife sanctuary are presently experiencing the sight of these butterflies flying over their host plants like musanda, exora and other garden plants.

This butterfly, usually, has a wingspan of 140-190mm and it is the largest butterfly found in the southern part of India.

The species is more common in the Western Ghats, which is a biodiversity hotspot with a high degree of endemism. It is active during early morning hours when both sexes feed in the forest on diverse food plants. Later on, it is seen sailing as high as 30 to 40 feet over the countryside until it descends later in the evening to feed again.

Suryakant Gaonkar, a volunteer of Vivekanand Environment Awareness Brigade, Keri, Sattari, was recently successful in clicking photographs of these butterflies in mating posture.

"It was indeed an enthralling sight of these butterflies which are endemic to Western Ghats region. I was able to capture their photographs when the male and female butterflies were mating on the exora plant," Gaonkar told TOI.

