



Article

Butterfly Shooting

by **KHEW Sin Khoon**

Category: Macro

Our NPS(S) outing on Sunday 29 Apr 2001 started on a rather gloomy day. About 10 of us met at the rendezvous point at 9:00am, but it was still drizzling! Our on-the-ball President, Graeme, was there to ensure that the walk would carry on, come rain, snow or shine.

The group moved off into the area known as Sime Forest, starting at the water treatment reservoir. To our pleasant surprise, the weather cleared and we had sunshine for the better part of the morning. Due to the cool weather, our butterfly friends were a bit reluctant to show themselves. However, as morning drew on, they began to fly circles around most of the photographers, who were trying in vain to get close to shoot these alert insects.



Shooting butterflies is not as easy as it looks. These insects are rather skittish, and unless the butterflies are occupied with other distractions, an inexperienced photographer would find it rather frustrating to get close enough for a decent macro shot.

To even the odds slightly, I had, on the previous evening, laid out some baits for the butterflies. Unfortunately, some hungry monkeys polished off the pineapple baits, and the rains that evening washed off most of the rest. However, the rotting prawn baits still worked, and attracted quite a number of butterflies. Our members who could hold their breaths longest (or could stand the stench

of rotting prawns) had a good session of getting close to some of the butterflies for some decent macro shots.

For most of the members on the outing, it was their first time at the locality, and it was a good walk and exercise for everyone, besides getting to know each other better. At the last leg of the walk, we encountered a pair of mating butterflies (*Athyma asura idita*) and those with macro lenses had a field day recording some R(A) material for their collection. The outing ended with some of us snacking on Nasi Bryani at the Casuarina Road Prata stall.

Generally, a photographer has to learn how to approach a resting butterfly, and from experience, establish the distance of the insects' circle of fear. Moving slowly is a must, as is ensuring that you do not cast your shadow onto the butterfly (or let the butterfly see your shadow moving towards it)



Once in position, make sure that the plane of the butterfly's wings is parallel to your film plane. I normally shoot with fill-flash, and with an aperture of no larger than f/8 to keep most of the subject in sharp focus. Remember to watch the background for distracting elements before you squeeze the shutter.

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