



Kurinji in bloom at Eravikulam National Park

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Coffee Table Book

Kurinji

The flower of the blue mountains



By
Roy Mathew

Published by
Mariyakutty-Mathew Foundation
in association with
Save Kurinji Campaign Council

About Neelakurinji

Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) is a shrub that used to grow abundantly in the shola grasslands of Western Ghats in India. The Nilgiris, which literally means the blue mountains, got its name from the purplish blue flowers of neelakurinji that blossoms gregariously once in 12 years.

Once they used to cover the entire Nilgiris like a carpet during its flowering season. However, now plantations and dwellings occupy much of their habitat.



Neelakurinji is the best known of a genus that has flowering cycles ranging from one to 16 years. There has been record of its flowering of *Strobilanthes kunthiana* every 12 years in specific areas since 1826. What triggers the massive flowering every 12 years is not known, but some explanations have been given.

The next major flowering is expected to place in September 2018 in places such as Eravikulam National Park. Thousands of people are expected to gather in places such as Munnar, Kodaikanal and Ooty where kurinji is flowering this season, between July and November.

It is not human alone who gather on the kurinji hills during the flowering seasons: Read more about that in the book.

About the Book

Kurinji and its romance, the vast expanse of grasslands carpeted by flowers, fascinate many. This book gives a lot of details that you may want to know about kurinji and the kurinji lore, illustrated by more than 25 high quality colour photos.

More than that, the book tells much about shola grasslands, the habitat of kurinji, which needs conservation and protection. Much came to be known about the sholagrassland ecosystem after kurinji grabbed public attention. The book will be an ideal companion for your visit to the kurinji hills.

It also has something to offer for those interested in the animal life of shola grasslands in the form of a scientific article by Dr. Jafar Palot. P. K. Uthaman writes about how flowering of kurinji came to be recorded from the British days to the present.

G. Rajkumar of Save Kurinji Campaign Council, explorer of forests and campaigner for protection of kurinji and its habitat was actively associated with publication of the book.

Contents of the book include where and when kurinji bloom, why the kurinji habitat should be protected, flora and fauna of shola forests and cultural associations of kurinji. The write-up on cultural associations is accompanied by translations of poems from the Sanghom literature.

There is also a write-up on varieties of kurinji (species diversity) along with several colour photographs. Besides, endemism and rarity in shola grasslands and threats to the sholas are discussed.

The 60-page book is printed on glossy paper with hard cover. It is priced at Rs. 375 a copy.

About the Authors

The book is largely written and edited by Roy Mathew, former Deputy Editor of The Hindu daily, who had reported for years on kurinji blooms and the environmental concerns over shola grasslands.

He holds masters degrees in both Science and Journalism with a diploma in English for Communication. He is an accomplished photographer and computer programmer. He has previously contributed to books on New Media edited by Kiran Prasad of Padmavati Mahila University, Tirupati.

(Home page: <https://expert-eyes.org>).

There are special contributions from Dr. Muhamed Jafer Palot, Zoological Survey of India, Western Ghat Regional Centre, Kozhikode, who has studied the fauna of shola forests in depth, and P. K. Uthaman who was one of the first to bring the massive flowering of the plant to public attention. Dr. Palot is honanary secretary of the Malabar Natural History Society. Mr. Uthaman was Field Publicity Officer in the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity of Government of India.

The cover is designed by Ansar Mangalathop, who is a lecturer at the College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram. Photographs have been contributed by eminent wildlife photographers, besides Roy Mathew

