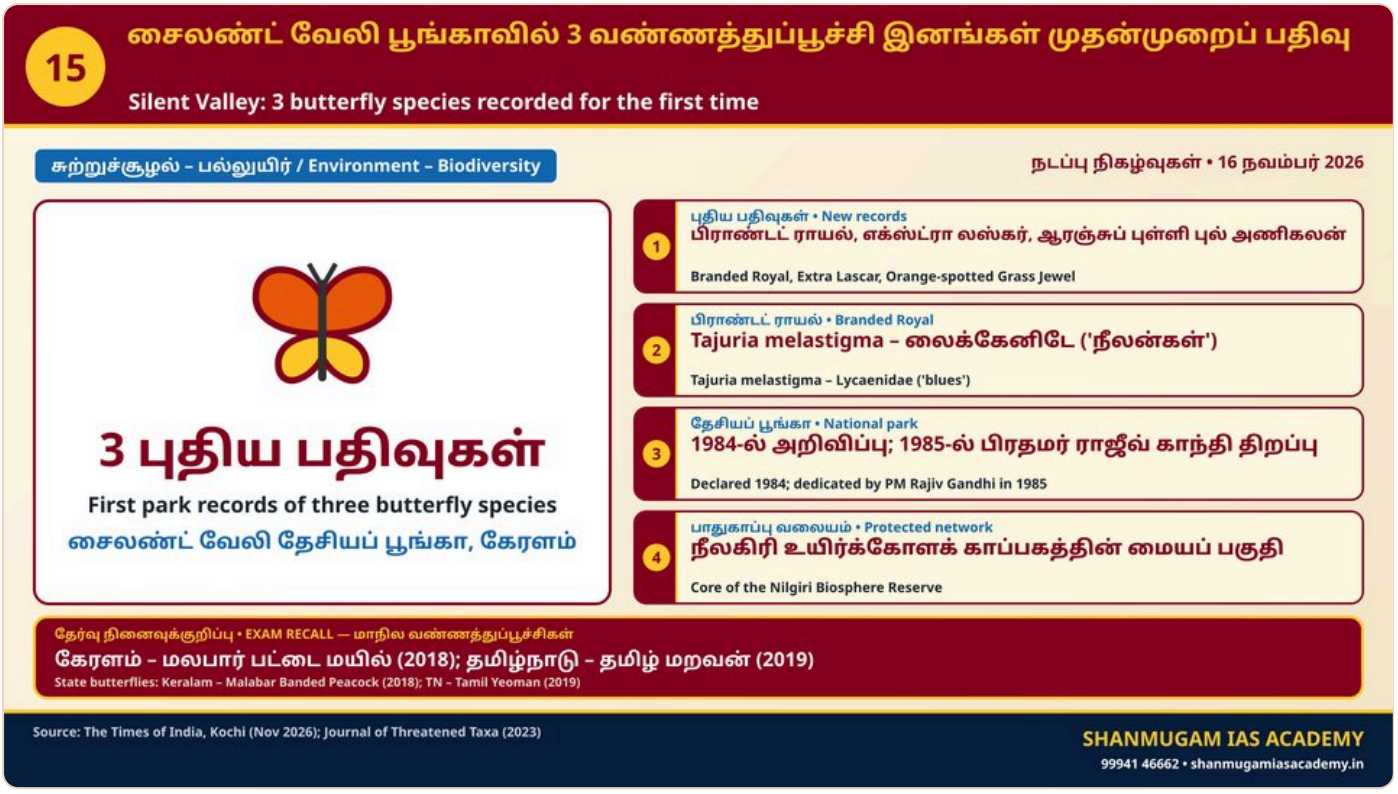
Silent Valley: 3 butterfly species recorded for the first time

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News

Three butterfly species were recorded for the first time in Silent Valley National Park, in Palakkad district of Keralam, during a recently concluded three-day butterfly survey, The Times of India (Kochi, Nov 2026) reported. They are the Branded Royal, the Extra Lascar and the Orange-spotted Grass Jewel. The Branded Royal (Tajuria melastigma) belongs to the family Lycaenidae, the 'blues'. Earlier, an October 2025 survey of dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) added six species, taking the park's list to 109; such repeated surveys keep expanding its species inventory. The records matter because butterflies are bioindicators of habitat quality and climate change. Under the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Act, 2026, passed by Parliament in August 2026, the State's name has officially become 'Keralam'.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Place	Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad district, Keralam
New records	Branded Royal, Extra Lascar, Orange-spotted Grass Jewel
Survey	Three-day butterfly survey (TOI report)
Branded Royal	Tajuria melastigma – Lycaenidae ('blues')
National park	Declared 1984; dedicated by PM Rajiv Gandhi in 1985

Point	Details
Protected network	Core of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve
Neighbour	Mukurthi National Park (Nilgiris, TN) to the north-east
State butterflies	Keralam – Malabar Banded Peacock (2018); TN – Tamil Yeoman (2019)
Renaming	Kerala (Alteration of Name) Act, 2026 – 'Keralam'

Background

- History – 'Save Silent Valley': When a hydroelectric project on the Kunthipuzha was proposed in the 1970s, the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), poet Sugathakumari, ornithologist Salim Ali and others opposed it. One of India's first major people's environmental movements, it led to the project being dropped and the park being declared in 1984; PM Rajiv Gandhi dedicated it in 1985.
- Geography: Lying in the Nilgiri sector of the Western Ghats on the Keralam–Tamil Nadu border, the park holds one of India's rare undisturbed tracts of tropical evergreen forest. It is the core of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (1986, India's first biosphere reserve) and adjoins Tamil Nadu's Mukurthi National Park to the north-east. The Western Ghats became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012.
- Science: Butterflies and moths form the order Lepidoptera ('scale wings') and undergo complete metamorphosis – egg → caterpillar → pupa → adult. India has over 1,300 butterfly species. As pollinators that respond quickly to environmental change, they are good bioindicators. A 2023 checklist in the Journal of Threatened Taxa recorded 290 butterfly species in Silent Valley National Park and its surroundings – about 89% of Keralam's butterfly species.
- Constitution / governance: Renaming a State needs a law of Parliament. The Keralam Assembly passed resolutions in 2023 and 2024; Parliament passed the Bill in August 2026 and 'Keralam' became official on the Centre's notification. Earlier, Madras State became 'Tamil Nadu' in 1969 and Orissa became 'Odisha' in 2011.

Tamil Nadu link: The Bhavani river, which flows through Silent Valley, fills Tamil Nadu's Bhavanisagar dam, and the park adjoins Mukurthi National Park in the Nilgiris. In 2019 Tamil Nadu declared the Tamil Yeoman (Cirrochroa thais), endemic to the Western Ghats, its State butterfly; Maharashtra was the first State to name a State butterfly (Blue Mormon, 2015).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Place: Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad district, Keralam; New records: Branded Royal, Extra Lascar, Orange-spotted Grass Jewel; Survey: Three-day butterfly survey (TOI report); Branded Royal: Tajuria melastigma – Lycaenidae ('blues').

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others opposed it. One of India's first major people's environmental movements, it led to the project being dropped and the park being declared in 1984; PM Rajiv Gandhi dedicated it in 1985.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. The Branded Royal, newly recorded in Silent Valley, belongs to which butterfly family, known as the 'blues'?

A) Papilionidae

B) Pieridae

C) Lycaenidae

D) Hesperiidae

Answer: C – Explanation: Lycaenidae – small, gossamer-winged butterflies. Papilionidae are swallowtails, Pieridae whites and yellows, Hesperiidae skippers.

2. Which was the first Indian State to declare an official State butterfly?

A) Keralam

B) Maharashtra

C) Tamil Nadu

D) Karnataka

Answer: B – Explanation: Maharashtra – Blue Mormon (2015). Tamil Nadu chose the Tamil Yeoman (2019); Keralam the Malabar Banded Peacock (2018).

3. Which of the following spearheaded the 'Save Silent Valley' movement in the 1970s–80s?

A) KSSP (Keralam)

B) Chipko Movement

C) Narmada Bachao

D) Appiko Movement

Answer: A – Explanation: KSSP (Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, 1962), joined by poet Sugathakumari. Chipko was in Uttarakhand; Appiko in Karnataka.

4. Butterflies and moths belong to which order of insects?

A) Coleoptera

B) Hymenoptera

C) Lepidoptera

D) Diptera

Answer: C – Explanation: Lepidoptera – 'scale wings'. Coleoptera are beetles; Hymenoptera bees, ants and wasps; Diptera flies and mosquitoes.

5. Which Tamil Nadu national park, a home of the Nilgiri tahr, adjoins Silent Valley National Park on its north-east?

A) Mudumalai

B) Anamalai

C) Guindy

D) Mukurthi

Answer: D – Explanation: Mukurthi (Nilgiris) – shola forest and grasslands, part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Mudumalai lies farther north, on the Karnataka border.

Sources: The Times of India, Kochi edition (Nov 2026 – reported); Onmanorama (26 Aug 2026); Onmanorama (15 Oct 2025); News On AIR (12 Aug 2026); Journal of Threatened Taxa 2023 – Silent Valley butterfly checklist (threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JoTT/article/view/7974); Keralam Forest Department / MoEFCC (park facts). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.