

Swallowtail butterfly

January 31, 2023

In news– A swallowtail butterfly disappearing from its previously known ranges from Myanmar and southern China to Vietnam has been recorded for the first time in India.

About the butterfly-

- The butterfly enthusiasts **recorded** the **“extremely rare” Noble’s Helen (Papilio noblei) from three locations** in the **Namdapha National Park of Arunachal Pradesh**(also India’s easternmost tiger reserve) between September 2019 and September 2021. Their report was published recently.
- The locations are approximately 80 km aerially from Putao of Myanmar’s Kachin State, where this species of swallowtail butterfly was last recorded in April 1999.
- The Noble’s Helen, closest to the Papilio antonio from the Philippines and characterised by a much large dorsal white spot, was once common in the montane forest at moderate elevations in northern Thailand.
- **Apart from Thailand, this species of swallowtail butterfly has been reported from Myanmar, Yunnan and Hubai regions of China, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.**
- The species has not completely disappeared from Thailand but is now known to be very rare in the ranges it was previously recorded.
- Butterflies are considered vital indicators representing the state of biodiversity and key ecosystem functions.
- **The Noble’s Helen with a wingspan of 100-120 mm was initially thought to be an aberration of the Papilio helenus** although the former has an extra white spot in the dorsum of the forewing.
- A closer study showed the Papilio noblei sports a consistent white spot and has a complete row of red lunules on the underside of the hind wing and discal white areas on the upper side of the hind wing.

- They are named for the characteristic tail-like extensions of the hindwings, although many species are tailless.
- Colour patterns may vary, although many species have yellow, orange, red, green, or blue markings on an iridescent black, blue, or green background. Sexual and seasonal differences in coloration also occur.
- Many swallowtails mimic the coloration and patterns of butterflies that are protected by a bad taste.