

Exotic and Endemic Plants and Animals of Nepal - Poems

by Ann Mayer

Artwork by children from the Nepal Orphans Home



An e-book produced for the children of Nepal who have such an amazing variety of natural resources to preserve for future generations.

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photo by Dewey Neild

Ann Mayer is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College with a major in zoology. After obtaining a master's of education from Harvard University, she taught in the primary grades for 21 years, mostly in the Churchville-Chili district near Rochester, New York.

In her retirement, she has combined a lifelong interest in poetry and a fascination with animals to write poems for children. This is her second book of poems about wildlife in Nepal.

To read a more detailed account of her writing experiences and download a free copy of her first poetry book, please visit:

<http://www.bioscienceresource.org/about-us/our-staff/>

Illustrations by children from Nepal Orphans Home.

Primary Artist: Bimal Shahi

Bimal was born in Dolpa, a highly mountainous region of Nepal. Cared for by a grandfather unable to any longer support him, Bimal came to Nepal Orphans Home. Bimal is fourteen years old and excels in school, dance, acting, and painting. Bimal has stated that as an adult he wishes to paint while working in the film industry. (Prepared 2-5-17)



Additional artists. (Their age as of 2-5-17)

Manisha Yonjan	age 7
Sarita Gurung	age 10
Sandeep Magar	age 7
Sanjeep Gurung	age 8
Suman Chaudhary	age 12
Gita KC	age 21
Anupa Gurung	age 17
Jeni Rai	age 15

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You can read some of the fascinating history and current work of the Orphans Home on their website: <http://www.nepalorphanshome.org>

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Bimal

EXOTIC and ENDEMIC PLANTS and ANIMALS of NEPAL

"Nepal is not a rich country,"
"It's very poor," some people say.
But we can find other meanings for "rich" and "poor"
If we think of these words in a different way.

Nepal is rich in natural beauty
With mountains, hills and Terai..
Each region has a special group
Of birds, and trees and butterflies.

When something's very special,
It's often called "**unique.**"
No place on earth except Nepal
Brings scientists, tourists, explorers-- all
Hoping to find what they seek.

One quarter of all the land
Has been set aside and protected.
National parks and wildlife preserves
Are rarely ignored and neglected.

So come, my friends,
Come one, come all
Let's go once more
On a trip to Nepal.
You'll meet some new creatures
That jump, fly, and crawl.

Some of these are called "**exotic.**"
This means they are strange and rare.
It can also mean weird or surprising.
When you see one, you may stare..
So be alert, I'm advising.
Watch for exotics EVERYWHERE.

You will also meet plants and animals
Found only in Nepal.
They weren't brought there by humans.
How they got there, we're not sure at all.

These life forms are called "**endemic.**"
They live in isolated places.
Some have not yet been discovered
On islands and snowy mountain faces.





Suman Chaudhary

Where Do Butterflies Come From?

From studies of butterflies
Throughout the ages,
Scientists know they have
Four life stages.

They start as an egg
As small as an ant
Laid by a butterfly
On one kind of plant.



Suman Chaudhary

From the egg
Comes a larva
With a huge appetite.
As it feeds on the plant,
It grows day and night.

Then one day it changes
And seals itself tight
In a snug little house
Where it keeps out of sight.

From this stage, called the pupa,
You'll have a surprise,
For out comes a creature
Which takes to the skies!
(You guessed right –It's a **BUTTERFLY!**)





Bimal

Great Orange Tip Butterfly

(Hebomoia glaucippe)

A butterfly with orange wing tips
Lands on a capparid plant.
Nectar it sips.

Its enemies don't know
The wings contain a poison
Which will kill them-
Presto!





Bimal

Himalayan Purple Sapphire
(*Heliophorus epicles latilmbata*)

A sapphire is a precious stone:
Purple ones are rare.
Likewise, the sapphire butterfly.
Watch for it close to the ground.
You'll often see it there.





Bimal

Emperor of India
(*Teinopalpus imperialis*)

A piece of green velvet
So beautiful and rare
Butterfly collectors
Come from everywhere.
Its swift, strong flight protects it
In high forests of evergreen trees.
This creature is endangered.
So do not touch it, please.





Bimal

Krishna Peacock

(Papilio Krishna)

The national butterfly of Nepal

Along its black wings
The scales which are scattered
Are vivid and bright -
Red, blue and yellow
Gray, green and white.
Because it's endangered,
It may not be exported,
But people catching it
Have been reported.



FLOWERS AND TREES



Bimal

Larkspur

(Delphinium himalayai)

Tall blue flowers in midsummer
Sway in the gentle breeze.
On open slopes in the country
Where they're pollinated by bees.

Butterflies visit these flowers
And spread the pollen, too;
But humans must NEVER eat these flowers
Because they will poison you.





Bimal

Nepalese Autumn Poppy

(Meconopsis autumnalis)

This poppy's dainty yellow flower
Is surprising to view,
Blooming in autumn
When most flowers are through.

As days grow short of sunlight
It takes away the gloom.
And brings a sense of cheerfulness
To any dreary room.

It grows near forest edges
On alpine slopes and grassy places.
As well as on the banks of streams.
The poppy thrives in open spaces.

Since it was first observed and studied
In the year 2008,
Scientists are discovering plants each year
Yet thousands are left to investigate.





Bimal

Joy Perfume Tree

Other names are White Sandalwood Tree, and White Jade Orchid Tree

(Michelia champaca alba)



I'd like to introduce you
To a lovely flowering tree.
Its white flowers are attractive
To more than birds and bees.



This stately orchid tree
Grows tall above the ground.
It may reach 30 meters,
And blooms the whole year round.

From its most important product
The joy tree gets its name.
The oil is used to scent perfume,
Bringing it world-wide fame.





Bimal

Monkey Orchid,
(*Orchis simia*)

The monkey orchid gets its English name
From the shape of the flower
Which has brought it fame.
Now people everywhere desire it.
Those who look closely will likely see
The body and face of a tiny monkey.

A powder called salep is made from the stem,
Which is useful as well as nutritious.
People add it to drinks and also to bread
Saying it tastes so delicious.

Sometimes it's used as a simple cure
For an ache or pain in the belly.
Other uses are still unexplored
Except for its making good jelly.





Anupa Gurung

Sacred Fig Tree (Bodhi Tree)

(Ficus religiosa)

This tree is also known as the **Peepal** or, **Pippala** tree.

The bodhi tree or sacred fig has many other names.

Probably more than twenty four,

But this tree has other claims.

Those who live where this tree grows

Know the reason for its fame.

People in awe of this sacred tree

Say that it holds a mystery.

There is constant movement in its leaves

Even when there is no breeze.

The sacred fig bears lots of gifts

Fulfilling many needs...

Delicious fruit, a home for birds,

Prayer beads from its small brown seeds.

Perhaps in the future, a cure for disease.

If we plant more of these trees,

Global warming may ease.



What do you think this is? Can you eat it?



Noble Rhubarb or Sikkim Rhubarb

(Rheum nobile)

In the Himalayan alpine region
Where trees don't grow at all,
You may think you see a monument
Cone-shaped and tall.

But this cream-colored object
Is actually alive;
Noble rhubarb lives up here.
In cold air it can thrive.

Both exotic and endemic
This plant is very strange.
Its pollen is spread by a fungus gnat
Living within close range.

This gnat lays its eggs in the seeds.
And when the larvae appear,
These seeds provide food and shelter.
The advantage for them is clear.

You cannot eat the fruit
But the leaf stem is nutritious.
Don't swallow the flowers and seeds,
Although they may look delicious.





Bimal

Tiger Grass or Asian Broom Grass

(Thysanolaena maxima)

This is a plant with many uses
For the things that it produces.
Food and fuel and cattle feed
Are a few of the things people need.

Tiger grass is a kind of bamboo
With wood that's very desirable, too.
When used in buildings, it can make
Them safer in a strong earthquake.

The value of tiger grass today
Is the help it gives people
In an economic way.

Its purple flowers
Which grow in plumes
Are tied together
To make brooms.
The stalks of grass
Which are very thick
Are woven together
To form a broomstick.

New uses are constantly being discovered.
No one knows what will next be uncovered.
But as tiger grass faces greater demand,
Bamboo plantations are taking more and more land.





Bimal

Common Butterwort

(Pinguicula vulgaris)

Other English names are Bog Violet and Moss Violet

Now you will meet a really weird plant,
But first you must learn a big word:
The word is "**carnivorous.**" It may be new one
You've never pronounced or heard.

Carnivorous animals prefer meat to grain
And prey upon animals in their food chain.
But how do you think a plant could eat meat
If it can't move about or walk on feet?

Butterwort is one kind of carnivorous plant.
It feeds on insects such as flies, moths and ants.
The leaves of this plant are sticky on top,
So that insects get caught when they come to a stop.

These leaves contain chemicals which aid in digestion
Of any small creatures in their possession.
The same kinds of insects which pollinate the flowers
May be trapped and digested within a few hours.
Search for the butterwort near small ponds and brooks.
Its funnel-shaped purple flower you can't overlook.





Bimal

MORE INVERTEBRATES
Himalayan Jumping Spider
(*Euophrys omnisuperstes*)

Suppose you had eight eyes.
Would you feel superior?
If you had no wings,
Would that make you inferior?

If you lived at the highest elevation
Of any creature on earth
Would that add greatly
To your scientific worth?

There IS such a creature!
A tiny jumping spider
Living at elevations
Of 21,000 feet or higher.

Their food consists of tiny insects
Blown up the mountain from below.
Whatever they eat arrives by chance.
When this food will come, they never know.

These tiny spiders are amazing jumpers.
They cling to their silk lines for safety.
Catching their prey requires great skill,
To do it, they must be hasty.

They also use silk to make little tents
For protecting their fragile egg cases.
In these tiny shelters they sleep at night,
One of the safest places.

So scant is knowledge
About this little spider
That science must search for it
Farther and wider.





Bimal

The Asian Giant Hornet

(Vespa mandarinia)

Vespa is a kind of wasp
With a fearsome reputation.
Its colors are are red, yellow, brown and orange
Its diet is based on predation.

For the most part, it dines on
Grasshoppers, wasps and honeybees.
The female builds a nest from bark
Inside hollow trees.

Its stingers hold dangerous poisons
Of which we know at least eight.
Any victims receiving these toxins
Are assured of death as their fate.

The giant hornet is threatened
By gradual habitat loss.
To survive, it must have dense woodlands
No matter what the cost.

Should we care about the survival
Of the largest wasp on earth?
Chances are, we will someday discover
How much it is really worth.





Bimal

Farewell

Now I need to say "Goodbye "

But I'll be back again

To take you on another trip.

(I can't yet tell you when.)

Next time I come you'll meet

Animals that are not so small.

And you may be amazed to learn

They **all** live in **Nepal**.



Notes

Altitude at which these plants and trees grow.

Larkspur

(Delphinium himalayai)

Grows in alpine shrub meadows at 3,000 – 5,000 meters.

It is found in the Eastern and Western Himalayas.

Nepalese Autumn Poppy

(Meconopsis autumnalis)

This plant has a limited geographic distribution. It prefers stony, humus-rich soil at elevations of 3,300 – 4,200 meters.

Joy Perfume Tree

(Michelia champaca alba)

Grows at 200-1600 meters in moist broad-leaved forests.

Sacred Fig Tree (Bodhi Tree)

(Ficus religiosa)

This tree is one of the longest lived trees in the world and is most common in India. It thrives in hot, humid environments. The tree is semi-evergreen and sheds its leaves in March & April.

Monkey Orchid

(Orchis simia)

This orchid is found in short grasslands, scrubland, and woodland edges. It prefers dry conditions and may live at a maximum height of 1,550 meters. It flowers from March – June.

Noble Rhubarb or Sikkim Rhubarb

(Rheum nobile)

The noble rhubarb grows at an altitude of 4,000 – 4,800 meters in the alpine zone above the tree line in the Himalayas.

Tiger Grass or Asian Broom Grass

(Thysanolaena maxima)

This plant is widely distributed throughout Nepal up to an altitude of 2,000 meters.

Common Butterwort

(Pinguicula vulgaris)

This plant grows in damp places such as bogs and swamps in low sub-alpine elevations. It flowers in June & July.





Bimal