

# SEOK JOO-MYUNG

(1908 - 1950)

**Field:** Taxonomy

**Subject:** Butterflies

**Nationality:** Korean

Entomologist  
of the  
Month



**Seok Joo-myung is best known for his invaluable contributions to the taxonomy of Korean butterflies.** Seok began researching butterflies in 1930, while working as a high school biology teacher. By 1940, he had discovered many errors in the classification of Korean butterflies by foreign scholars. Seok condensed the 921 butterfly species previously described into approximately 250 species. Seok examined the wing shape, patterning, colors, and sizes of hundreds of thousands of butterflies, and he determined that many butterflies previously described as separate species were just individual variations of the same species. Seok's research resulted in a collection of over 750,000 specimens, which provided detailed distribution records for many Korean butterfly species. Seok Joo-myung served as the head of the Department of Zoology at the Seoul National Science Museum in 1946. During the Korean War, he remained at the museum to protect the butterfly collection, rather than evacuating. Tragically, in 1950, the National Science Museum was bombed and destroyed, and Seok was shot and killed when he was mistaken for a North Korean soldier.

## References:

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- Seong-gyu, Lee. (2008). "Do what others haven't done for 10 years; Dr. Joo-Myung Seok, Dedicated to Hall of Fame". The Science Times. November 14, 2008.
- This factsheet was produced by Katie Barie, a Penn State Insect Biodiversity Center graduate student

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