

A Preliminary Study of the Faunal Diversity in a Fragmented Lowland Evergreen Rain Forest Patch: Wawekele Reserve Forest, Avissawella, Sri Lanka

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The abundance of lowland evergreen forest patches within the lowland wet zone is considerably very high in Sri Lanka and they function as invaluable natural production systems through providing catchment areas for regional water sources like rivers, streams, wells etc. A preliminary study was conducted to assess the faunal diversity in the Wawekele Reserve forest area in the Southern boundary of Colombo District in Sri Lanka. This forest covers 45 ha and falls within the lowland wet zone, at an elevation of 90m-120m above sea level. Approximately, 600 person hours were spent in the field over a period of six years from August 2012 to August 2018 to document freshwater fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, butterflies and dragonflies through the visual observations following the trails and streams within day time. A total of 131 different faunal species including 08 freshwater fish species, 05 amphibian species, 15 reptile species, 64 bird species, 05 mammal species, 22 butterfly species and 12 dragonfly species were recorded from Wawekele, of which 03 freshwater fish species (37.50%), 05 amphibian species (~100%), 04 reptile species (~26.67%), 06 bird species (~9.38%), 02 mammal species (~40%), 02 butterfly species (~9%) and 02 dragonfly species (~16.67%) are endemic to Sri Lanka. Out of 131 species recorded 10 (7.63%) Near Threatened, 04 (3.05%) Vulnerable, 05 (3.82%) Endangered and 01 Data deficient (0.76%) species according to the red list of 2012 by international union for conservation of nature. This lowland evergreen forest patch is affected by noise pollution due to its locality near an urban area. Further night time observations are required to uncover the nocturnal faunal species and more detailed studies are required to formulate the better management plans for conserve this bio diversity rich forest patch.

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