

# PRELIMINARY STUDIES ON THE ECOLOGY OF SELECTED VILLU SYSTEMS

**R. P. Subasinghe**

*(Dept. of Zoology, University of Colombo)*

and

**M. A. B. Jansen**

*(Mahaweli Development Board)*

Villus are seasonally inundated marshy areas. They are distributed chiefly in the Mahaweli Ganga floodplain.

Most of the floodplain villus were investigated, whilst the Handapan villu, Velankadu villu, Karadola villu and Velvevete villu were selected for more intensive study.

The general physical features of the villus were initially investigated. Some aspects of the villu ecology were then studied in relation to the physical parameters.

The distribution of vegetation in the villus, as investigated by general field techniques, tends to show a characteristic zonation pattern which is related to the hydroperiod and the depth of flooding.

The seasonal pattern of utilization of the villus by livestock and wildlife is determined by the hydroperiod and extent of flooding. Direct observations, line transects and other field techniques were employed in all faunal studies.

Population densities of birds including the migrant species in and around the villus changes with the seasonal fluctuation of water levels.

Fish catch data analysis shows that the villu waters harbour characteristic fish populations. In some villus indigenous fish species predominate.

These preliminary studies show that the villus sustain a wide diversity of life, which however show seasonal variations in density as determined by the level of water and flooding.