

FAUNAL STUDIES IN THE SINHARAJA RAIN FOREST  
I. COMPOSITION OF THE VERTEBRATE FAUNA

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The vertebrate fauna of the Sinharaja MAB Reserve was listed under the five major groups of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. While some of the birds and mammal species were recorded during systematic investigation of these groups, the presence of the remaining taxa was determined by opportunistic data collection.

A checklist of 254 vertebrate species recorded so far in Sinharaja is presented, the 62 endemic species present among them are indicated. These species represent 36% and 44% of the total number of vertebrate and endemic vertebrate species (excluding marine fauna) in Sri Lanka respectively. The proportions of species recorded in Sinharaja as a percent of the total number of species in the island for each group of vertebrates are as follows: amphibians 50%, mammals 47%, birds 37%, reptiles 26% and fish 16%. Similarly, the proportions of endemic species of the total number of endemic vertebrate species in the island are, birds 95%, mammals 58%, reptiles 31%, amphibians 42% and fish 41%.

This study presents for the first time in Sri Lanka a complete checklist of vertebrate fauna belonging to all the major vertebrate groups for a single location and highlights the need for similar studies in the other climatic zones of the country. The high proportion of vertebrate species and endemics present in Sinharaja further supports the decision to protect this forest as a representative of the unique Sri Lankan rain forests.

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