# ICHTHYOFAUNA OF MUTHURAJAWELA AND THEIR TROPHIC RELATIONS

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The ecological significance of Muthurajawela lies in its being an extensive wetland (Kotagama et.al 1989), an ecotone, an abandoned paddy field, a peat bog, a saline marsh and an ecosystem threatended by reclamation and human activities. To assess the ichthyofauna of Muthurajawela fishes were collected from 63 stations grouped into 18 subareas, using cast nets, drop nets and scoop nets from August 1990 to January 1991. Although 21 species were collected in this study, 72 species belonging to 37 families were listed from Muthurajawela from authentic records. Endemic species are rare, but the indigenous cichlids were common.

The number of species in southern estuary > rivers and bays > canals and creeks > water bodies by the road side > water bodies by the side of houses, the number of fish caught was hightest in the southern estuary (>100/hr), followed by the water bodies north and southwest of Ja Ela (60-99,hr) and water bodies south of Ja Ela, Madapalam Ela and Kalu Oya (40-59).

Based on environmental factors and fish assemblages it was possible to identify sub-communities of fish at Muthurajawela. In nearly - freshwater lentic pools, Trichogaster pectoralis was the dominant herbivore. But in lentic canals the dominant herbivores were Barbus vittatus and Aplocheilus spp. The ubiquitous Ambassis dayi was the common omnivore in these canals. In lentic pools, Ophiocephalus striatus and Heteropneustes fossilis, Elops machnata, and Caranx sexfasciatus were carnivores. In the rivers and canals, Etroplus suratensis, E. maculatus, Scatophagus argus and Aplocheilus spp. were common herbivores, and Lates calicarifer, Lutjanus argentimaculatus, Caranx sexfasciatus and Tachysurus caelatus were the common canivores. The fish community of the southern estuary was composed of those found in the rivers and canals and those that have emigrated from the sea, such as the rabbit fishes, mullets, slip mouths and puffers (Punchihewa, 1991).

References: Kotagama, S.W., L. Pinto and J.I. Samarakoon 1989. A directory of Asian Wetlands : Sri Lanka. 68 pp Ed. D.A.Scott. WWF/IUCN/ICBP/IWRB.

Punchihewa, N.N. 1991. Seasonality in the utilization of mangroves and seagrasses by the fish and crustacean communities of the Negombo estuary, Sri Lanka. Unpub. M.Phil dissertation (Zoology) Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala.