

LITTER DECOMPOSITION AT UPSTREAM AND DOWN STREAM
OF A REGULATED HEAD WATER TRIBUTORY

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The patterns and the rates of leaf litter decomposition in aquatic ecosystems are hitherto unknown in Sri Lanka. Studies were conducted to determine the rates and patterns of exotic (eg. Eucalyptus) and indigenous (eg. Terminalia arjuna) leaf litter at upstream and down stream of a regulated stream (Nilambe Oya) in the upper Mahaweli River basin using litter bag technique.

The rate of decomposition was significantly different between two species and between the same species at upstream and downstream. Initial weight loss in Eucalyptus was significantly higher than that of Terminalia arjuna and that may be attributed to high rate of leaching. The site specific variability in leaf litter decomposition perhaps may be due to the differential abundance of macroinvertebrate colonizers at two sites.