

D-01: An analysis of flora of Uda Walawe National Park

S P Ekanayake¹, H D Ratnayake¹, S Harischandran²

(¹Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya, ²Dept. of Botany, Univ. of Peradeniya)

Uda Walawe National Park is an important wild life refugium in the southern intermediate zone of Sri Lanka. It has an area of 300 sq km situated in the districts of Ratnapura and Moneragala. The park is well known for its elephant population.

The present study was done as a part of gathering supportive data (floristic) for conservation of the park. The following baseline data were gathered: (i) vegetation cover types (ii) list of flowering plants and (iii) some diversity parameters - taxonomic and life form compositions.

An extensive field survey was carried out in Uda Walawe National Park to record vegetation cover types. At the same time, specimens of plants were collected 'cris-crossing' different habitats of the national park. Plant specimens were labelled and entries made in a note book on the spot. Phenotypic characters that help identification were noted. The specimens were fixed with methylated spirits within the shortest possible time. These were dried using for 72h, 15 bulbs of 100 W and made into herbarium specimens. Botanical names were verified with reference to standard samples at the National Herbarium, Peradeniya.

The national park is a mosaic of several vegetation cover types dominated by anthropogenic plant communities. These are natural semi-evergreen forests, planted forests, riverine forests, savanna, scrublands, grasslands, rock outcrops and chena cultivated areas.

Tentative checklist of flowering plants shows the presence of 314 species (10 spp. endemic) belonging to 75 families. The list of species comprise 115 trees, 40 shrubs, 124 herbs, 9 lianas, 15 small climbers and 3 parasitic plants. The dominant families are *Leguminosae* (34 spp.), *Graminae* (27 spp.) and *Euphorbiaceae* (22 spp.).

The study proves the importance of the national park with regard to its fairly rich flowering plants community and habitat diversity in the 300 sq km area. Apparently, the low endemism (3.1%) indicates the invasion of new species; as is usually the case with habitat disturbance. Moreover, abundance of species like *Leguminosae*, *Graminae* and *Euphorbiaceae* with many weedy or invasive plants reflects the secondary nature of this park habitat.