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Some comments over misguiding reports on the species composition of mangroves in Sri Lanka

The species richness of mangroves in many geographical areas is decreasing with time as a result of the destruction of mangrove forests and exposure to various anthropogenic stresses. In contrast, some recent reports on the number of mangrove species in Sri Lanka have extended the list of mangroves by 13 newly added species. This raises

questions on the reliability of such reports and prompted us to undertake the present study. All mangrove communities along the coastal belt from Puttalam to Palatupana were visited and species composition was recorded along band transects selected through floristically more diverse areas of each mangrove community and other areas of those mangroves were also thoroughly examined. Reported localities of newly added species were especially checked for the presence of those particular specie(s).

Certainly, the number of species of mangroves depends on the definition of mangroves. In the present study, the criteria given in Tomlinson (1986) were used to distinguish mangrove and non-mangrove plants (*e.g.* mangrove associates). According to that list, this study reports 21 species of mangroves but other recent reports have increased this number up to 38, possibly as a result of misidentifications and deliberate additions.

This study highlights the possible causes of misidentification of mangrove species in these questionable reports, while providing an objective and realistic revision of the mangrove species actually present in Sri Lanka today.

It is highlighted that additions to the list of mangrove species should be done correct and proper scientific justification.