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Analysis of Socio-ecological factors affecting Bundala National Park

Bundala National Park (BNP) is the only Ramsar wetland in Sri Lanka, which is reputed for its rich biological influence of people living in and near the Park. Questionnaires were prepared for the general community, occupational information and usage of park resources. According to the findings inhabitants were using the park resources to a considerable extent. Our results revealed this might be due to settlement of people close to the national park boundary. Over 90% of people knew that the BNP is a National Park but only a few that it is a Ramsar wetland. Similarly bird migration is a know factor (80% of people) but not the importance of the habitat for such birds. Income level of people was poor and over 90% percent of the people did not have a permanent income. In the fishing community 50% families had 4-6 family members than the other families (3-4 members per family). Fuel wood collection, killing wild life for economic purposes, over-fishing with disturbing aquatic environments, usage of water bodies as a dumping ground, unsuitable land use practices and agricultural practices were identified harmful to the park ecosystem balance. Data independent. Most families engaged in paddy cultivation (70%) and a few families engaged in chena cultivation (30%). Over 30% families used forests for fuel wood collection and hunting wild life. The study revealed that poor living conditions and some occupational practices might have profound effects on the Park environment and water bodies. Proper management plans are required to secure the future of BNP ecosystem to provide the people better livelihoods. Community participation in management and conservation practices could be proposed as a tool in BNP.