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**An empirical study on ecosystem effects of fishing in Kala Wewa; an ancient reservoir in Sri Lanka**

S N Dushani, P M Liyanage\* and M P Kumara  
*Ocean University of Sri Lanka, Mahawela Road, Tangalle*

Fisheries provide positive outcomes to society. Nevertheless, it can create detrimental effects on the ecosystem. However, it is still questionable as to how far fishermen concerned about these deleterious ecological effects of fishing in the absence of proper monitoring, controlling and surveillance measures of fisheries management. This study investigated the ecosystem effects of fishing in the Kala Wewa reservoir in Sri Lanka. Considering easy access to respondents, a convenience sample of 33 fishermen was selected from the Wijithapura landing site. A questionnaire survey was conducted in February, 2013 to collect primary data. Data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0.

A series of indicators were used to gauge the impressions of fishermen concerning the sustainability of fish resource on which they rely. According to Wilcoxon signed rank test, they strongly supported the view that; there were less number of fish, less fish diversity, native fish species have been threatened by introduced species, and illegal fishing had increased. The catch included 40 – 45% of *Pterygoplichthys multiradiatus* (tank cleaner) as a bycatch. Tank cleaners do not have a market value at all, and hence they are thrown out as discards. Although fishermen had not lost or abandoned their fishing gear intentionally, a majority (94%) complained that sometimes their gill-nets were stolen. They did not know whether the stolen nets had been abandoned into the water or not and therefore could not make any conclusion regarding ghost fishing. Although the gill-nets were commonly practiced fishing gear in the Kala Wewa reservoir, fishermen were not aware of the habitat destruction caused by gill-net fishery. Revitalization of the existing fisheries cooperative society is suggested to prevent illegal fishing and other malpractices in order to overcome the present tragedy of the commons in the Kala Wewa reservoir.

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