



Diversity and Status of Endemic and Threatened Angiosperm Flora of Coastal Ecosystems of The Central Kerala

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Abstract

Biodiversity is the variety and variability of life forms and each organism contribute to the ecological balance. In India, Western Ghats is a hotspot rich in highly endangered and endemic plants and majority within Kerala state. Kerala is also having rich coastal and midland areas with sand dunes, wetland and sacred groves which are threatened due to the urbanisation. This study enumerates the threatened plant species within Kerala based on secondary information and try to bring out significant threatened taxa within the coastal areas of central Kerala. About 21 plant taxa found to have distribution in central Kerala and which have been assessed based on IUCN criterion based on the secondary information. Recommendations were made for detailed assessment especially those restricted to the vanishing coastal ecosystems.

Introduction

Biodiversity is the diversified species in form and function, closely integrated through a multiple network of interdependencies. The total number of angiosperm species is estimated to be around 450,000, of which 10–20% is still unknown to science (Pimm & Joppa, 2015). In India, there are 17,527 species, 296 subspecies, 2215 varieties, 33 subvarieties

and 70 forma, altogether 20,141 taxa of angiosperms under 2991 genera and 251 families, representing approximately 7% of the described species in the world (Karthikeyan, 2009). There are over 15,000 species of flowering plants in India which account for 6% of all plant species in the world (Cheeluvu, 2016). Over 47500 species of plants belonging to various groups have been documented from India. About 28% of plants that occur in India are endemic to the country (ENVIS, 2016). The Western Ghats of Peninsular India has been recognized as one of the 34 hotspot areas in world in terms of species and endemism. About 2100 endemic flowering plants have been reported from out of 5800 flowering plant species in this mega endemic area (Rao, 1984; Yoganarasimhan, 2000; Nair & Henry, 1983). The state harbours 5094 taxa under 1537 genera and 221 families of flowering plants (Sasidharan, 2012).

In India there are about 5725 endemic taxa of angiosperms (33.5% of Indian flora) which are located in 25 hot spots. There are about 1272 species of endemic angiosperms out of 3800 species occurring in Kerala (33.5% of Kerala flora) which represent 22.6% of Indian endemics. Seventy percent of the 1272 species of endemics have the major areas of distribution in Kerala with spill overs in