

URBAN BIRD DIVERSITY IN SELECTED LOCATIONS OF COLOMBO DISTRICT AND THE ATTITUDES OF RESIDENTS TOWARD BIRDS IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD

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Urban green spaces offer many ecosystem services, emphasising the importance of evaluating urban biodiversity and urban community attitudes in planning these environments. This study investigated the avifaunal diversity in selected locations in the Colombo district and the attitudes of residents towards urban birds. Study sites were selected based on the level of urbanisation in different divisional secretariat divisions (DSD) (Kotte and Dehiwala DSDs as highly urbanised areas and Homagama and Padukka DSDs as moderately urbanised areas). A wetland and a woodland habitat from each DSD were sampled. Three-point transects along a single-line transect were surveyed to quantify avifauna, and a social survey was conducted among 115 inhabitants. A total of 78 bird species belonging to 42 bird families were recorded in the study areas during the study period. The species richness and diversity of birds were lower in urban than in suburban habitats. Most respondents (84.3%) observed birds in their neighbourhood, and most of them appreciated the small garden birds and water birds (93.04% and 86.95%, respectively). However, *Corvus splendens* (house crow) was noted by residents for their undesirable behaviour, such as making noisy calls and defecating on properties. Additionally, most respondents fed birds in their homes (83%), and female respondents were more involved in feeding birds compared to male respondents. Most of the respondents were interested in watching birds in their urban neighbourhood (53%) and watching documentaries about nature on television (47.8%). A relatively low percentage of residents (32.1%) reported issues with urban birds. However, 97.38% of respondents agreed with the statement, "Urban birds are important to maintain the natural balance in the city". Since birds in the neighbourhood positively contribute to the people's well-being, it is vital to use data on avifaunal diversity to plan and manage urban natural resources effectively.

Keywords: Resident's attitudes, Urban bird diversity, Urbanisation