

Vertebrate Fauna in the Human Inhabited areas of Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary, Ernakulam District, Kerala, India

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Abstract—Kerala (8° 17' - 12° 47' North and 74° 52' - 77° 24' East) is one of the smaller states in India. With an area of 38,86,300 ha, Kerala constitutes about 1.18% of the land area of India. The State is divided into 14 administrative districts and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is situated in the Arabian Sea off the coast of north Kerala. Tamil Nadu forms a border on the south and partly on the east, and Karnataka is located on the north and northeast. Its greatest length north to south is about 545 km and its greatest width is about 120 km, though most parts are considerably less wide (Ali 1999). The State of Kerala is very rich in the diversity of fauna and flora. Kerala has a long history of protecting wild animals, the oldest protected area being the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The forests of Kerala are home to some of the endemic and endangered species of India. Kerala has six National parks and 16 Wildlife Sanctuaries, Of which, Thattekkad Bird sanctuary is one of the famous ones. The sanctuary falls between 10°7' and 11°N' latitude and 76°40' and 76°45'E longitude and is situated in the Kothamangalamtaluk of Ernakulam District of Kerala. It has considerable ecological, faunal, floral, natural and zoological significance with a 25.16 sq.km area lying on the northern bank of River Periyar. Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary have well defined natural boundaries made by the reserved forests of Kuttampuzha and Neriya Mangalam Ranges and the two rivers namely, the Periyar and the Edamalayar border the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a part of Anamudi Elephant Reserve. World famous ornithologist Dr. Salim Ali recognized the species richness of this sanctuary and declared the richest one he had ever seen, during his survey in 1933 in which he found about 167 species of birds. Recently, Dr. Sugathan recorded 270 species of birds, which is now upgraded to 284 species. The present study focus on the vertebrate fauna of the human inhabited areas of Thattekkad bird sanctuary which spreads around 9 sq.kms, for a period of 3 years from March 2015- April 2018. It was observed that the fauna is comprised of reptiles (5 different families), 18 species of fishes (4 orders and 7 families), 13 species of mammals (7 orders and 10 families) and 100 species of birds (14 orders and 37 different families). The presence of rich biodiversity in the habitat signifies its importance for the maintenance and stability of ecosystem, necessitate the need for conservation strategies and an eco-development model for environmentally compatible development. The primary aim of the conservation strategy is to reduce the dependency of human inhabitants of the sanctuary on the forest based natural resources which will curtail the intrusion of wild animals into their dwelling areas causing Human-Wildlife conflict.