

A Study on Lichen Diversity in Two Different Agro-ecological Zones of Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka is renowned for its unique biodiversity and high endemism. Among a variety of natural resources the country holds, lichens are hardly studied. However, lichens have been in use as therapeutics by several communities worldwide. Further, they have been identified as bio-indicators which can be used to monitor the quality of an environment. Studies on lichen identification can provide data on the diversity, abundance and distribution which are essential in lichen conservation and their sustainable use as natural sources for practical applications. Climate change is a global crisis leading to loss of biodiversity which emphasizes the study of lichens before extinction.

In the present study, a contrast in lichen diversity was observed between the two sampling sites: Nonpareil Estate (NE) and Samanalawewa Wilderness (SW) which represent two climatologically different areas of the country. A total of 36 lichen specimens were collected from the two locations. Lichen characterization based on morphology and chemistry could identify 22 lichen specimens from NE and 11 from SW, up to genus level. Six lichen specimens were identified up to species level: *Parmotrema tinctorum*, *Cladonia macilenta*, *Heterodermia leucomela*, *Teloschistes flavicans* and *Dirinaria picta*, out of which *P. tinctorum* was common to both sites.

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