Bird Diversity of Dekinda Forest Reserve, Balana, Sri Lanka: Implications for Conservation

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ABSTRACT

Dekinda Forest Reserve, located close to the historic town of Balana, Sri Lanka (7°16’ N, 80°29’ E, 525-585 m above sea level) consists of rainforest plant species spanning an area of about 40 ha. The forest has been maintained since the colonial times as a watershed reserve for nearby plantations, most of which comprised tea and paddy. The objective of the present study was to measure the avifaunal diversity in Dekinda Forest Reserve, as an indicator of its overall biodiversity, and compare it with those of nearby home gardens. The study was conducted from March to June, 2012. Point counts with unlimited distance were used in conjunction with Distance© software (Release 6) to document the abundance and density of bird species. Peak counting hours were between 0600-0900 h and 1600-1830 h. Counts were made weekly. Despite its small size, the forest reserve is home to 58 bird species. Among the notable species, there were six endemic species, namely, the Sri Lanka wood pigeon (Columba torringtoni) (estimated density 8/km²), Layard’s parakeet (Psittacula calthropae) (19/km²), Sri Lanka lorikeet (Loriculus beryllinus) (70/km²), yellow-fronted barbet (Megalaima flavifrons) (79/km²), Sri Lanka scimitar babbler (Pomatorhinus melanurus) (11/km²), and brown-capped babbler (Pellorneum fuscocapillus) (10/km²). In addition, four proposed endemic species were also recorded. Given the importance of this forest as a watershed area and the large number of bird species it supports, Dekinda Forest Reserve is clearly an important site for biodiversity conservation.

Keywords: avifaunal diversity, density, endemic species,