



Research Highlight

HOW CAN WE CONSERVE FISH FAUNA OF WESTERN GHATS?

Zunaira Mahmood

Department of Basic Sciences,
ACE College for Women, Faisalabad, Pakistan

The Western Ghats of India which is also called “Great Escarpment of India” has been declared as World’s Heritage¹. Endemic species in any region possess a huge significance as they amplify the amount of genetic diversity of that specific area. It is reported that Western Ghats is one of the hotspots of biodiversity in the world and gifted with rare, endemic as well as threatened species of flora and fauna². Accordingly, the freshwater fish fauna is considered as one of the most imperative threatened and endemic taxonomic species of this area³.

It is reported that factors which play a key role in destruction of endemic species include introduction of alien fish species, industrial and urban pollution, over harvesting destructive fishing methods, habitat loss, big dam constructions, diseases such as; EUS (Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome) and unmanaged aqua-rium trade⁴.

Global warming is also a potential threat to endemic species from biodiversity hotspot⁵. Human activities and many invasive species also play a significant role in damaging the flaural diversity of Western Ghats⁶.

For this reason, conservation measures should be initiated in order to protect the endemic as well as threatened species. Accordingly, by reducing human encroachment in aquatic habitat as well as use of aquatic resources in a sustainable manner can resolve this issue.

Considering these facts, scientists conducted a new research in order to investigate the assemblage structure, evaluate abundance, distribution, diversity, richness of endemic as well as threatened fishes from Northern Western Ghats of Kolhapur district. The study area is located in the extreme Southern part of Maharashtra state⁷.

In this study, scientists reported 23 species of fishes belonging to seven families and 19 genera. Among them, 9 species were found to be threatened and 20 species are endemic to Western Ghats. It is also reported by scientists that six species are threatened and endemic as well. *Puntius sahyadriensis*, *Nemacheilus anguilla*, *Pterocryptis wynaadensis* and *Glyptothorax trewavasae* are first time reported from Kolhapur district.

Conclusively, the number of threats to fish fauna from rivers of Kolhapur district is very

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high. There is a dire need to take a solid decision towards the conservation of ichthyofauna. If the present situation remains constant, the adverse conditions might lead to the loss of the ichthyofauna from experimental area. The crux of matter is continuous monitoring of fish species and protection of fish fauna is sorely needed.

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