



1 FRESHWATER FISH FAUNA OF RIVERS OF 2 SOUTHERN WESTERN GHATS, INDIA

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13 **Abstract.** We studied the freshwater fish fauna of Rivers of Southern Western Ghats for a period of three years
14 from 2010 to 2013. We recorded 64 species belonging to 6 orders, 14 families and 31 genera. Alteration in the
15 micro and macro habitats in the system severely affects the aquatic life especially fishes and also complicates
16 the fish taxonomy. **In the present study a total of 31 sites of six river systems of Southern Western Ghats were**
17 **studied in which a total of 64 species belonging to 6 orders, 14 families and 31 genera were recorded.** Among
18 the 64 species *Cyprinidae* was the dominant family with **3 family** 18 genus and 49 species (76.6%) compared to
19 other order and families, **further the data analyses suggested that species belonging to the order Cypriniformes**
20 **were found to be the dominant species in the locations considered in the present survey.** Interestingly, among the
21 31 sites Thunakadavu stream, Gulithuraipatti, Athirappalli, Naduthotam, Nadathittu, Mullaithodu,
22 Thonanthikla, Noolpuzha and Sinnaru exhibited high variations in species abundance and as well species
23 richness. Fifteen out of the 64 fish species endangered to the Western Ghats. *Garra periyarensis* and *Cirrhinus*
24 *cirrhosus* are known to be vulnerable and *Hemibagrus punctatus* is Critically Endangered because of various
25 anthropogenic activities. The significances of the study and timely measures needed to protect the species have
26 also been concisely discussed.

27


28 **Keywords:** Southern Western Ghats, Water Quality, Species Diversity, Endemics, threats, Conservation.

29

30 1. **RODUCTION**

31 The Western Ghats of India has a rich freshwater fish fauna with a high level of endemism (Dahanukar
32 *et al.*, 2004). However, current knowledge of the threats faced by Western Ghats fishes suggests that a major
33 part of this fauna is threatened by human activities and invasive alien fish species (Dahanukar *et al.*, 2004).
34 Thus, knowledge of the diversity and distribution of the fish fauna is essential for designing and implementing
35 conservation strategies. However, data on the fish fauna of the Western Ghats have limitations as most of the
36 rivers have not been surveyed extensively and checklists for individual rivers are not available. In the present
37 study we document the freshwater fish fauna of the the long and meandering eastward flowing river systems of




38 Southern Western Ghats, especially from Bhavani River System, Moyar River System, Chalakudy River
39 System, Periyar River System, Cauvery River System and Nugu River System,  the southern region of the
40 Western Ghats.

41 History of the Indian freshwater fishes is way back to Hamilton (1822) on the fishes found in the river
42 Ganges and its tributaries. The documentation and listing of the fishes from different part of India was carried
43 out mainly by Jerdon (1848). A comprehensive and authoritative account on the freshwater fishes has been
44 provided by Day (1865 – 1878). The further investigations on the freshwater fishes of India especially the
45 Western Ghats was initiated by Hora (1921; 1937; 1938; 1941; 1942; 1949) and he enunciated the Satpura
46 Hypothesis. These led to the new descriptions, enlisting with elaborate discussions on the endemism and other
47 zoogeographical relevance and several new taxa have been added from Kerala during this period.

48 Studies on the endemic fishes from various streams and rivers in the Western Ghats mountain ranges
49 have been compiled. Fish diversity in selected streams in northern Karnataka (Arunachalam *et al.*, 1997);
50 Central Western Ghats (Arunachalam 2000) have been reported. Arunachalam *et al.*, (2005) reported a new fish
51 species *Neolissocheilus wynaadensis* from the Karnataka part of Western Ghats. Arunachalam (2007) have
52 reported *Psilorhynchus amplicephalus*, a new species from Balishwar river of Assam, India. Earlier Biju *et al.*,
53 (1996) has recorded *Puntius filamentous* (Val.) and *Puntius melanampyx* (Day) in Orukomban and Thelikal
54 during the survey from December 1996 to May 1997. Manimekalan (2002) has rediscovered the critically
55 endangered air birthing cat fish *Clarias dayi* hora (Pisces: *Clariidae*) from Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary.
56 Manimekalan (1998) has described a new species *Glyptothorax davissinghi Manimekalan and das* (Pisces:
57 *Sisoridae*), a new cat fish from Nilambur in the Nilgiri Biosphere, South India. Manimekalan (1997) made a
58 new recorded of *Schismatorhynchus (Nukta) nukta* (Sykes) (Pisces: Cyprinidae) from Moyar river. Arunkumar
59 *et al.*, (2015) has recorded 37 species from Cauvery river system. Silas (1951) listed 25 fish species from
60 Anamalai hills and 10 species from Neliampathi hills. His study extended the distribution of several species
61 earlier known only from the central division of the Western Ghats to the southern division beyond the Palghat
62 gap.

63 2. METHODOLOGY

64 2.1 Collection and Identification

65 Fishes were collected using cast net, dip net, gill net and drag net from various streams and rivers of
66 Southern Western Ghats. At most care was taken not to damage the species while collecting. A total of 5
67 specimens from each species were collected and fishes were photographed before it was preserved in formalin
68 so that the fishes can be photographed with original colour. Further the specimens were preserved in 10 per cent
69 formalin for smaller samples and for larger samples formalin has been injected into the abdominal cavity so that
70 the internal organs are well preserved for further taxonomic studies. The specimens were tagged and the
71 reference numbers were given for specimen identification and transported to Lab. The species were identified
72 based on the key given by  ar and Jhingran (1991), Jayaram (1999 & 2010) and Menon (1992). Holotype
73 and paratypes of species were examined in Zoological Survey of India, Southern Regional station, Chennai and
74 Kolkata for confirmation of species. Voucher specimens have been made for each species and deposited at the
75 Biodiversity and DNA Barcoding Lab, Dept. of Environmental Sciences, Bharathiar University.

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79 **2.2 Physico-chemical Analysis of the Water Quality at Sampling Sites**

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81 Water samples were collected from all the **seven sampling stations** during post-monsoon, the depth of
82 10cm. Water quality analyses such as pH, conductivity, turbidity, total dissolved solids (TDS), resistivity,
83 salinity, dissolved oxygen (DO), and water temperature were done as per the regulations of **APHA 1995**,
84 respectively. Field analysis of the samples was done using portable water analyzer (X tech, Nagman Instruments
85 Electronics, India) (Gurumurthy and Tripti, 2015; Thomas *et al.*, 2015; Anushiya and Ramachandran, 2015).
86

86

87 **2.3 pretative analysis**

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89 To quantify species diversity, **the purposes of comparison**, a number of indices have been followed.
90 To measure the species diversity (H') the most widely used Shannon index (Shannon and Weaver, 1949),
91 Evenness index (E) (Pielou, 1975), and Dominance index (D) (Simpson, 1949) were used. Similarity
92 coefficients of the fish community were calculated by using the widely used Jaccard index (Southwood, 1978).
93 The above statistical analyses were performed using **software**.
94

94

95 **2.4 processing and analysis**

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97 Further, the data from different appropriate sources are coded and recorded into a database system. For
98 the accuracy of the data recorded at every source of the survey, correspondence between elementary data sheets
99 and the original coding sheets were considered; accuracy and quality of the data were inspected up, edited, and
100 coded at the field level.
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101

102 **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Fish Fauna were surveyed from the streams and rivers of Southern Western Ghats. Collection sites
105 were selected based on the earlier faunal distribution published in literature. The Western Ghats is a mountain
106 range that runs almost parallel to the western coast of Indian peninsula. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site
107 and is one of the eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity in the world. It is also called as "The Great
108 Escarpment of India". The range of Western Ghats runs from north to south along the western edge of the
109 Deccan Plateau, and separates the plateau from a narrow coastal plain, called Konkan, along the Arabian Sea. A
110 total of thirty nine world heritage sites including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserve forests - twenty
111 in Kerala, ten in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and four in Maharashtra adds fame to the Western Ghats. Fish
112 fauna were collected from the long and meandering eastward flowing river systems of Southern Western Ghats,
113 especially from Bhavani River System, Moyar River System, Chalakudy River System, Periyar River System,
114 Cauvery River System and Nugu River System. The study sites and its characteristics are recorded and
115 presented in Table 1 and Fig 1. In the present study a total of 31 sites of six river systems of Southern Western
116 Ghats were studied in which a total of 64 species belonging to 6 orders, 14 families and 31 genera were recorded
117 (Table. 2). Among the 64 species *Cyprinidae* was the dominant family with 3 family 18 genus and 49 species
(76.6%) compared to other order and families (Fig.2, Fig.7).



118


119 **3.1  Species Density, Abundance, and Distribution**

120 Among the 31 sites high species diversity was recorded at Sinnaru of Cauvery River system (H' -
121 1.268) and low diversity was recorded at Thunakadavu tunnel, Chalakudy River System recorded (H' - 0.357)
122 (Table: 3, Fig: 3). The maximum species richness was recorded in Sinnaru ($S - 21$) and the minimum species
123 richness was recorded at Puliyarkutti 3rd bridge, Thunakadavu tunnel and Sorrakottaodai ($S - 3$), (Table: 3, Fig:
124 4). The maximum species abundance 152 was recorded at Naduthottam and lowest abundance 16 was recorded
125 at Sorrakottaodai and Belikoonda (Table: 3, Fig: 5). The maximum dominance ($D - 21.346$) was recorded at
126 Sinnaru and lowest dominance ($D - 2.121$) was recorded at Thunakadavu tunnel (Table: 3).

127 **3.2  Species composition**

128 Species similarity between the sites was very less among 31 sites of six river systems. Cluster analysis showed
129 that similar species composition between the sites based on the species diversity. (Table:4, Fig: 6). Totally 5
130 clusters were grouped for 31 sites of six river systems of southern Western Ghats from which it's clearly seen
131 that most of the sampling sites were clustered together because of the similarity of species composition among
132 the sites. Several sites where human disturbances are prevalent also fall in the same cluster. Certain sites remain
133 separate, because **only species composition in that particular site is not present in the other location**. There are
134 two main reasons for this separate clustering – 1. due to the rare species forms and 2. due to low water
135 temperature.

136 **3.3  Water Quality:**

137 Water Quality parameters were recorded and presented in table 2.6. It is found that the parameters
138 value lies between the IS: 10500 Permissible limits. (Table: 6). The acidic or alkaline nature of the water will be
139 decided based on the pH level. Water pH ranges between 6.5 to 8.5, Kadapilliarthittu (pH - 9) was recorded
140 with pH level is high and Anjurily, Athirapalli, Urilikal (pH – 7.2) recorded low pH level compared to the other
141 sites. Low conductivity value 27.8mS was recorded in Puliyarkutti river 8th bridge and Puliyarkutti river 3rd
142 bridge sites and high conductivity value 85.2mS recorded in Noolpuzha of Nugu river system. Total dissolved
143 solids (TDS) are a measure of inorganic salts dissolved in water. This dissolved solid comes from both natural
144 and human sources. Mitchell and Stapp in 1992 have suggested Changes in TDS concentrations that can be
145 harmful. If TDS concentrations are too high or too low, the growth of much aquatic life can be limited, and
146 death may occur. Thenkasithodu witnessed a low value of TDS content as 13.7 mg/l and Urilikal recorded a
147 high value of TDS as 51.9mg/l. A minimum Resistivity value of 2.58 was measured at Kadapilliarthittu and a
148 maximum 45.6 was measured at Thenkasithodu. A high level of DO was recorded at Thenkasithodu as 6.1mg/l
149 and  level of DO was recorded at Belikoonda as 0.63 mg/l. Arunkumar *et al.*, (2015) recommended that the
150 lowest DO recorded at sampling sites is due to organic-rich domestic waste let into the river by the tourists in
151 the river system. Low value of salinity was recorded at sites viz., Thenkasithodu, Anjurily, Sorrakottaodai,
152 Naduthotam, Nellithurai, Kovaikutram falls, Puliyarkutti River 8th bridge and Puliyarkutti River 3rd bridge as
153 0.01 ppt and a high level of salinity was noted at Kadapilliarthittu as 0.18ppt. Maximum water temperature was
154 recorded at Pillapara as 33.6°C and a minimum water temperature was noted at Thenkasithodu as 18.9°C.



155

156 Rajan (1955) has studied the fishes of Moyar river system and has reported 48 species. Manimekalan
157 (1998) has reported 38 species from Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary. Manimekalan has stated that species like
158 *Labeo dero*, *Puntius mudumaliensis*, *Schimatorhynchus nukta*, *Danio neilgherriensis*, *Crossocheilus latius*
159 *latius*, *Clarias dayi*, *Gambusia affinis* were restricted to Moyar river system. Also *Clarias dayi* a critically
160 endangered species has been recorded by Manimekalan (2002). *Puntius carnaticus* and *Danio aequipinnatus* was
161 recorded as common species of Moyar river system. Rajan (1955) and Mukerjee (1931) has studied the
162 headwaters of Bhavani river and reported species like *Travancoria elangata*, *Barilius canarensis*, *Rasbora*
163 *caveri*, *Garra menoni*, *Silurus wynaadensis* were restricted to Bhavani River system. *Puntius filamentosus*,
164 *Puntius melanampyx*, *Puntius carnaticus*, *Barilius gatensis*, *Danio aequipinnatus*, *Rasbora daniconius* were very
165 common in Bhavani River System. Arunkumar *et al.*, (2015) has recorded 37 species from Cauvery river
166 system. Among several fish species recorded, the only *Garra gotyla stenorhynchus* is reclassified as one of the
167 endangered species in Grand Anicut Cauvery, which is locally consumed (Murthy *et al.*, 2015). But *Garra*
168 *gotyla stenorhynchus* is still under least concern status of IUCN.

169

170 Silas (1951) in his faunal account discusses the extension of range of *Salmostoma acinaces* (*Chela*
171 *argentea* Day), *Barbodes carnaticus* (*Barbus* (*Puntius*) *carnaticus*), *Osteochilus* (*Osteochilichthys*) *thomassi* and
172 *Batasio travancoria* and lists 2 endemic species described by Herre viz. *Homoloptera Montana* and
173 *Glyptothorax housei*. Silas further reported 5 species from the Cochin part of the Anamalai hills viz. *Barilius*
174 *bakeri*, *Puntius denisoni*, *Travancoria jonesi*, *Noemacheilus triangularis* and *Batasio travancoria*. *Puntius*
175 *bimaculatus* earlier considered as a juvenile of *Puntius dorsalis* has been collected from these hills. Interestingly
176 this species is found to be the most dominant *Puntius* species in the hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats especially
177 Javadi hills. *Puntius punctatus* earlier considered as a synonym of *Puntius ticto* has been kept as a separate
178 species and both these species have been collected from Anamalai hills (Menon, 1999).

179



Diversity in the Anamalais is very high except for a few areas such as the Aliyar river basin. The lack
of diversity in the Aliyar river basin is due to the fact that most of the streams in the area are non-perennial and
are prone to disturbance/contamination by the local tribal people. This diversity is attributed to the controlled
fishing activity by locals and protection by Forest officials. The physical environment like forest vegetation,
riparian vegetation, water temperature, habitat type, and in-stream cover (which provide hiding places for fish)
play a major role in species diversity and richness.

186


Altitude also plays a major role in species diversity. Colinvaux (1930) proposed the theory of diversity
that changes with altitude on mountainsides – diversity is lowest at high elevation and vice versa. The present
finding supports the above theory. The westward flowing Periyar River originates near moolavaigai and reaches
the Periyar Lake. The Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the biodiversity rich areas in southern Western Ghats from
where the Periyar River originates, (Silas 1950, 1952; Kurup *et al.*, 2004). Earliest studies on the fish fauna of
the PTR dates back to 1948 when Chacko (1948) listed 35 species from the Periyar Lake, including the critically
endangered small scaled *Schizothoracin Lepidopygopsis typus*. Later Menon & Remadevi (1995) described
Hypselobarbus kurali from streams adjoining the Periyar Lake raising the total number of fish species to 38. In
the present study 64 species were collected from 31 study sites of six river systems of Southern Western Ghats.

194




195 Species like *Puntius melanampyx*, *Puntius carnaticus*, *Puntius amphibious*, *Puntius fasciatus*, *Puntius*
196 *mahecola*, *Devario aequipinnatus*, *Garra mullya*, *Travancoria jonesi*, *Nemacheilus guntheri* were commonly
197 found in all the six river systems (Fig:7).


198

199  has stated that habitat selection of the fishes is influenced by the body structure, food and shelter
200 and by physiological process. Moreover the fish analyses the characters of the rivers and streams and further
201 they respond to the characters and helps themselves for the survival of the fittest. Hence it is reliable that the
202 Micro and Macro habitat plays a key role in the morphology and physiological characters and modifications of
203 the species. The fish prefers the habitat based on the nature of the rivers or stream substratum type where the
204 muddy bottom with debris is records for high species richness of the bottom feeders. Odum (1945) well stated
205 that the flow of the water in the channel is an important factor prevailing the distribution of fishes, the species
206 like *Barilius*, *Hypselobarbus*, *Puntius*, *Travancoria*, *Rasbora* and *Tor* prefers fast flow. The nature of the
207 substratum and the flow rate seem to be more or less closely interrelated in governing the distribution of the
208 fishes. This induces the dominance of the cyprinid species to be well flourished in all the river systems, of the
209 Southern Western Ghats. It is clear that Ecological structure plays a key role in representing River Systems of
210 Southern Western Ghats which is flourished with rich species diversity and abundance.

211 4. SUMMARY

212 The morphological-based fish taxonomy is more inconclusive because the micro and macro habitat

 have influenced the morphological variations within the species. In the present study, the fish species were
215 collected by using different mesh size of gill nets, cast net and dip nets from the long and meandering eastward
216 flowing river systems of Bhavani, Moyar, Chalakudy, Periyar, Cauvery and Kabini. In the present study a total
217 of 31 sites of six river systems of Southern Western Ghats were studied in which a total of 64 species belonging
218 to 6 orders, 14 families and 31 genera were recorded. Among the 64 species *Cyprinidae* was the dominant
219 family with 3 family 18 genus and 49 species (76.6%) compared to other order and families, further the data
220 analyses suggested that species belonging to the order Cypriniformes were found to be the dominant species in
221 the locations considered in the present survey. Interestingly, among the 31 sites Thunakadavu stream,

222 Gulithuraipatti, Athirappalli, Naduthotam, Nadathittu, Mullaithodu, Thonanthikla, Noolpuzha and Sinnaru
 exhibited high variations in species abundance and as well species richness. Importantly, the present study
223 clearly documented that altitudes play a major role in species diversities and as well in species abundance. The

224 fish is a healthy and high protein rich food, are in peril in Southern Western Ghats and the comprehensive listing
225 of various species distribution and continuous monitoring is the most critical need of protection in the present
226 scenario. It is very apparent to mention that the use of explosives, poisons and fishing of juveniles could be the
227 primary causes to the sharp decline of the fish population in the study areas. Establishment of sanctuaries,
228 preservation of genetic materials, awareness programmes and enforcement of laws are some of the short and
229 long term remedial measures for the efficient conservation of faunal population in Southern Western Ghats.
230 Social workers, fishermen and local people must also be educated about the importance of conservation of fish
231 fauna in their area in general, so that the personnel in turn can also make awareness among the people in an
232 ecological spirit.

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Table 1: Study site and its Habitat character

S. No	Study site	Latitude and longitude	Altitude	Forest type	Stream order	Stream Width (m)	Stream Depth (m)	Area (m ²)	Volume (m ³)	Mean Velocity (m/sec)
Moyar River System										
1	Gulithuraipatti	11° 36' N and 76° 47' E	312	Thorn forest	4	10	6	1000	6000	4
2	Kallampalayam	11° 31' N and 77° 0' E	300	Thorn forest	4	13	8	1300	10400	4
3	Belemeenthurai	11° 36' N and 76° 47' E	520	Dry deciduous	4	19	1.75	1900	3325	4
Chalakydy River System										
4	Orukomban range	10° 22' N and 76° 39' E	450	Dry deciduous	4	6	0.5	600	300	3
5	Thenmudiparai	10° 24' N and 76° 36' E	510	Dry deciduous	5	25	1.5	2500	3750	3
6	Baghapallam	10° 27' N and 76° 43' E	748	Dry deciduous	5	8	0.5	800	400	3
7	Theilikal	10° 27' N and 76° 44' E	840	Dry deciduous	4	4	1.0	400	400	3
8	Puliyarkutti 8 th bridge	10° 23' N and 76° 40' E	527	Dry deciduous	4	19.2	1.2	1920	2304	3
9	Puliyarkutti 3 rd bridge	10° 23' N and 76° 41' E	512	Dry deciduous	4	37	1.5	3700	5550	3
10	Thunakadavu stream	10° 25' N and 76° 46' E	510	Dry deciduous	4	13.6	0.5	1360	680	3
11	Thunakadavu tunnel	10° 20' N and 76° 34' E	520	Dry deciduous	5	15	10	1500	15000	5
12	Urlikal	10° 19' N and 76° 53' E	3238	Dry deciduous	2	7	1.5	700	1050	2
13	Athirappalli	10° 18' E and 76° 34' N	202	Semi evergreen	4	8	3	800	2400	4
14	Pillapara	11° 36' N and 76° 47' E	267	Semi evergreen	4	5	2	500	1000	4



Bhavani River System										
15	Kovaikultralam falls	10° 56' N and 76°41' E	560	Semi evergreen	2	5	1.2	500	600	4
16	Nelhthurai	11° 17' N and 76°53' E	380	Thorn forest	4	27	1.1	2700	2970	5
Periyar River System										
17	Oorpannikaham	09° 28' N and 77°16' E	884	Evergreen	4	12	2.1	1200	2520	2
18	Valukuparai	09° 28' N and 77°17' E	869	Evergreen	4	7.5	0.3	750	225	3
19	Melaparai	09° 26' E and 77° 18' N	965	Evergreen	4	11	4.2	1100	4620	3
20	Naduthotam	09° 26' N and 77° 19' E	950	Evergreen	4	7.5	0.3	750	225	3
21	Ummikuppamthodu	09° 28' N and 77° 14' E	943	Evergreen	4	5	3.0	500	1500	4
22	Sorrakottaodai	09° 28' N and 77° 15' E	879	Evergreen	4	7	1.5	700	1050	3
23	Mullaitthodu	09° 31' N and 77° 16' E	869	Evergreen	4	10	0.6	1000	600	3
24	Anjurily	11° 36' N and 76°47' E	912	Evergreen	4	20	5	2000	10000	2
25	Thenkasithodu	11° 36' N and 76°47' E	872	Evergreen	4	11.3	0.5	1130	565	2
Cauvery River System										
26	Kadapillyarthittu	12° 07' N and 77° 46' E	1137	Dry deciduous	4	75	1.5	7500	11250	2
27	Belikoonda	12° 11' N and 77° 43' E	267	Dry deciduous	4	80	10	8000	80000	5
28	Nadathittu	12° 08' E and 77° 44' N	262	Dry deciduous	4	70	6	7000	42000	3
29	Sinnaru	12° 06' N and 77° 46' E	225	Dry deciduous	4	55	0.5	5500	2750	3
30	Thonanthikla	12° 07' N and 76° 46' E	341	Dry deciduous	4	25	1	2500	2500	4
Nugu River System										
31	Noolpuzha	11° 41' N and 76° 23' E	2810	Semi evergreen	3	25	4.1	2500	10250	4

*Velocity (m/sec): 1. Very slow (<0.05); 2. Slow (0.05-0.2); 3. Moderate (0.2-0.5); 4. Fast (0.5-1.0); 5. Very fast (>1).



Figure 2: List of Freshwater Fauna recorded during the present study

S.no	Species	Distribution locations	IUCN
	Order: Cypriniformes		
	Family: Cyprinidae		
	Sub - Family: Cyprininae		
1	<i>Puntius melanampyx</i>	18	DD
2	<i>Puntius carnaticus</i>	10	LC
3	<i>Puntius amphibius</i>	4	DD
4	<i>Haludaria fasciatus</i>	11	LC
5	<i>Dawlinsia filamentosus</i>	4	LC
6	<i>Puntius sarana sarana</i>	4	LC
7	<i>Puntius dorsalis</i>	2	LC
8	<i>Puntius chola</i>	2	LC
9	<i>Puntius sophore</i>	1	LC
10	<i>Eechathalakenda ophicephalus</i>	2	EN
11	<i>Puntius mahecola</i>	7	DD
12	<i>Pethia conconius</i>	4	LC
13	<i>Sahyadria denisonii</i>	2	EN
14	<i>Sahyadria chalakudiensis</i>	2	EN
15	<i>Puntius sarana spirulus</i>	1	LC
16	<i>Puntius bimaculatus</i>	3	LC
17	<i>Pethia ticto</i>	1	LC
18	<i>Cirrhinus cirrhosus</i>	2	VU
19	<i>Skymatorynchus nukta</i>	3	EN
20	<i>Labeo boggut</i>	1	LC
21	<i>Labeo kontius</i>	1	LC
22	<i>Labeo ariza</i>	3	LC
23	<i>Labeo calbasu</i>	2	LC
24	<i>Labeo boga</i>	2	LC



25	<i>Hypsilobarbus curmuca</i>	4	EN
26	<i>Hypsilobarbus periyarensis</i>	3	EN
27	<i>Hypsilobarbus dubius</i>	6	EN
28	<i>Tor malabaricus</i>	5	EN
29	<i>Tor kudhree</i>	9	EN
30	<i>Osteochilus longidorsalis</i>	2	EN
	Sub - Family: Danioninae		
31	<i>Salmophasia acinaces</i>	1	LC
32	<i>Barilius gatensis</i>	16	LC
33	<i>Barilius bakeri</i>	10	LC
34	<i>Barilius barana</i>	2	LC
35	<i>Barilius bendelisis</i>	3	LC
36	<i>Devario aequipinnatus</i>	21	LC
37	<i>Rasbora daniconius</i>	13	LC
	Sub - Family: Oreininae		
38	<i>Lepiphygopsis typus</i>	2	EN
	Sub - Family: Garrinae		
39	<i>Garra mullya</i>	16	LC
40	<i>Garra surendranathi</i>	3	EN
41	<i>Garra nastuta</i>	1	LC
42	<i>Garra periyarensis</i>	2	VU
43	<i>Garra hughi</i>	3	EN
44	<i>Garra gotyola stenorynchus</i>	2	LC
45	<i>Crossocheilus latius latius</i>	1	LC
	Family: Balitoridae		
	Sub - Family: Balitorinae		
46	<i>Travancoria jonesi</i>	8	EN
	Sub - Family: Nemacheilinae		
47	<i>Nemacheilus dennisoni</i>	2	LC
48	<i>Nemacheilus guntheri</i>	7	LC



	Family: Cobitidae		
	Sub - Family: Cobitinae		
49	<i>Lepidocephalus thermalis</i>	5	LC
	Order: Siluriformes		
	Family: Bagridae		
	Sub - Family: Bagrinae		
50	<i>Hemibagrus punctatus</i>	3	CR
51	<i>Mystus cavasius</i>	4	LC
	Family: Siluridae		
52	<i>Ompok bimaculatus</i>	1	NT
	Family: Sisoridae		
	Sub - Family: Glyptosterninae		
53	<i>Glyptothorax housei</i>	1	EN
	Order: Cyprinodontiformes		
	Family: Aplocheilidae		
	Sub - Family: Aplocheilinae		
54	<i>Aplocheilus lineatus</i>	3	LC
	Order: Synbranchiformes		
	Sub- order: Mastacembeloidei		
	Family: Mastacembelidae		
	Sub - Family: Mastacembelinae		
55	<i>Macroganthus pancalus</i>	1	LC
56	<i>Mastacembelus armatus</i>	1	LC
	Order: Perciformes		
	Sub- order: Percoidei		
	Family: Ambassidae		
57	<i>Chanda nama</i>	2	LC
	Family: Pristolepididae		
58	<i>Pristolepis marignata</i>	3	LC
	Sub- order: Labroidei		



	Family: Cichlidae		
59	<i>Oreochromis mosambica</i>	1	NT
60	<i>Etroplus suratensis</i>	3	LC
61	<i>Etroplus maculatus</i>	2	LC
	Sub- order: Gobioidi		
	Family: Gobiidae		
	Sub - Family: Gobiinae		
62	<i>Glossogobius guiris</i>	1	LC
	Order: Mugiliformes		
	Sub- order: Belonoidei		
	Family: Belonidae		
63	<i>Xenetodon cancilia</i>	3	LC
	Family: Hemiramphidae		
64	<i>Hyporhamphus limbatus</i>	2	LC

* EX – Extinct; EW – Extinct in the Wild; CR – Critically Endangered; EN – Endangered; VU – Vulnerable; NT – Near Threatened; LRnt – Low Risk near threatened; LRlc – Low Risk least concern; LRcd – Low Risk conservation dependent; DD – Data Deficient.

Figure 3: Indices of diversity of fishes respective to altitudes of six river systems

Sampling Locations	Diversity (H')	Evenness (E)	Abundance	Richness (S)	Dominance (D)
Gulithuraipatti	0.769	0.769	62	10	5.016
Kallampalayam	0.62	0.686	38	8	3.316
Belemeenthurai	0.841	0.932	19	8	8.55
Orukomban range	0.711	0.842	49	7	4.576
Thenmudiparai	0.74	0.875	59	7	4.833
Baghapallam	0.617	0.793	36	6	3.728
Thekkikal	0.805	0.843	32	9	5.701
Puliyarkutti 8th bridge	0.879	0.921	39	9	7.8
Puliyarkutti 3rd bridge	0.401	0.841	17	3	2.429



Thunakadavu stream	0.864	0.864	68	10	6.026
Thunakadavu tunnel	0.357	0.748	42	3	2.121
Urilikal	0.734	0.869	131	7	4.598
Athirappalli	1.01	0.936	52	12	11.143
Pillapara	0.718	0.923	25	6	5.769
Kovaiutralam falls	0.722	0.928	40	6	5
Nellithurai	0.757	0.896	29	7	5.639
Oorpannikaham	0.767	0.849	27	8	5.4
Valukuparai	0.91	0.954	28	9	9.947
Melaparai	0.798	0.944	19	7	7.773
Naduthotam	1.019	0.915	152	13	9.936
Tmmikuppamthodu	0.527	0.678	41	6	2.384
Sorrakottaodai	0.465	0.976	16	3	3.243
Mullaithodu	1.045	0.968	48	12	12.966
Anjurily	0.537	0.768	19	5	3.054
Thenkasithodu	0.638	0.668	100	9	3.327
Kadapilliyarthittu	0.8	0.886	37	8	6.055
Belikoonda	0.625	0.804	16	6	3.75
Nadathittu	1.198	0.921	77	20	15.481
Sinnaru	1.268	0.959	75	21	21.346
Thonanthikla	1.069	0.909	46	15	11.129
Noolpuzha	0.946	0.946	78	10	8.938




Figure 4: Species composition among the 31 sites


Cluster no	Cluster between	Study sites
1	1 - 4	Thunakadavu stream, Baghapallam, Kallampalayam, Thunakadavu tunnel
2	5 -7	Thenmudiparai, Orukomban range, Gulithuraipatti
3	8 - 28	Melaparai, Valukuparai, Belemeenthurai, Anjurily, Oorpannikaham, Nellithurai, Belikoondu, Kadapilliyarthittu, Sorrakottaodai, Puliarkutti 3 rd bridge, Mullaithodu, Kovaikutram falls, Puliarkutti 8 th bridge, Sinnaru, Nadathittu, Thonanthikla, Thellikal, Pillapara, Athirapalli, Noolpuzha, Ummikuppamthodu
4	29	Naduthotam
5	30	Thenkasithodu
6	31	Urilikal



Table 5: Distribution and abundance of fishes of six river systems

S.no	Collection sites (Collection site number as in Table 1)																															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
1				4	6	12	7	10	5	11	32	5	2	5				2	2			5	4	5								10
2	1	1	5				1	2	6															4								
3	1	2					1																									
4								5	10	5	13				15	1	1	2				4	5									15
5	1																															
6	15	1														10																
7	1	1																														
8	7	15																														
9											11																					
10																				19	26											
11										25		8	5	5																		
12																											4	3	3			
13												5	5													10	1	3	4			
14												1	1																			
15																	3															
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17		1									10																					
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Table 6:  Water quality of 31 study sites of six river systems

 ex	pH	Conductivity (mS)	TDS (ppm)	Resistivity (K Ω)	DO (mg/L)	Salinity (ppt)	Water temperature ($^{\circ}$ C)
Gulithuraipatti	8.4	57.8	20.37	24.2	3.5	0.03	23.8
Kallampalayam	7.9	45.2	28.5	21.9	2.5	0.02	24.1
Belemeenthurai	8.4	59.2	37.7	16.4	1.3	0.03	24.5
Orukomban range	7.5	33.9	26.5	22.4	3.5	0.02	23.4
Thenmudiparai	8	45.2	28.5	21.9	2.5	0.02	24.1
Baghapallam	8	57.8	38.0	16.8	2.4	0.03	21.7
Theellikal	8.8	59.2	37.7	16.4	1.3	0.03	24.5
Puliyarkutti 8 th bridge	7.79	27.8	18.0	34.8	5.4	0.01	23.5
Puliyarkutti 3 rd bridge	7.79	27.8	18.0	34.8	5.4	0.01	23.5
Thunakadavu stream	5.9	38.3	28.3	22.2	5.09	0.02	21.4
Thunakadavu tunnel	5.9	38.3	28.3	22.2	5.09	0.02	21.4
Urilikal	7.2	78.7	51.9	12.9	1.4	0.03	24.1
Athirappalli	7.2	35.2	47.5	3.97	0.73	0.02	32.7
Pillapara	7.6	34.0	19.5	29.9	0.89	0.02	33.6
Kovaikutralam falls	7.5	31.3	20.1	32.3	3.2	0.01	22.5
Nellithurai	7.3	30.3	20.3	31.5	2.3	0.01	25.5
Oorpannikaham	8.3	50.3	32.3	20.0	1.2	0.02	24.8
Valukuparai	7.7	66.9	43.8	15.1	0.7	0.03	24.8
Melaparai	9	44.7	28.8	22.5	1.3	0.02	26.1
Naduthotam	7.5	46.2	30.4	20.6	0.7	0.01	25.9
Ummikuppamthodu	7.7	64.9	43.2	17.1	1.2	0.03	24.8
Sorakottaodai	8	34.2	21.9	29.5	1.1	0.01	23.1
Mullaithodu	8.1	78.6	51.4	12.5	0.9	0.04	24.2
Anjurily	7.2	21.5	13.6	47.5	4.86	0.01	19.2
Thenkasithodu	5.2	22.0	13.7	45.6	6.11	0.01	18.9
Kadapilliyarthittu	9.6	39.1	26.3	2.58	0.72	0.18	30.5
Belikoonda	9.4	39.8	26.3	2.63	0.63	0.17	32.7
Nadathittu	9.4	39.8	26.3	2.63	0.63	0.17	32.7
Sinnaru	9.2	39.5	26.3	2.65	3.11	0.11	30.2
Thonanthikla	9.2	39.5	26.3	2.65	3.11	0.11	30.2
Noolpuzha	7.32	85.2	51.7	11.8	3.62	0.04	23.2

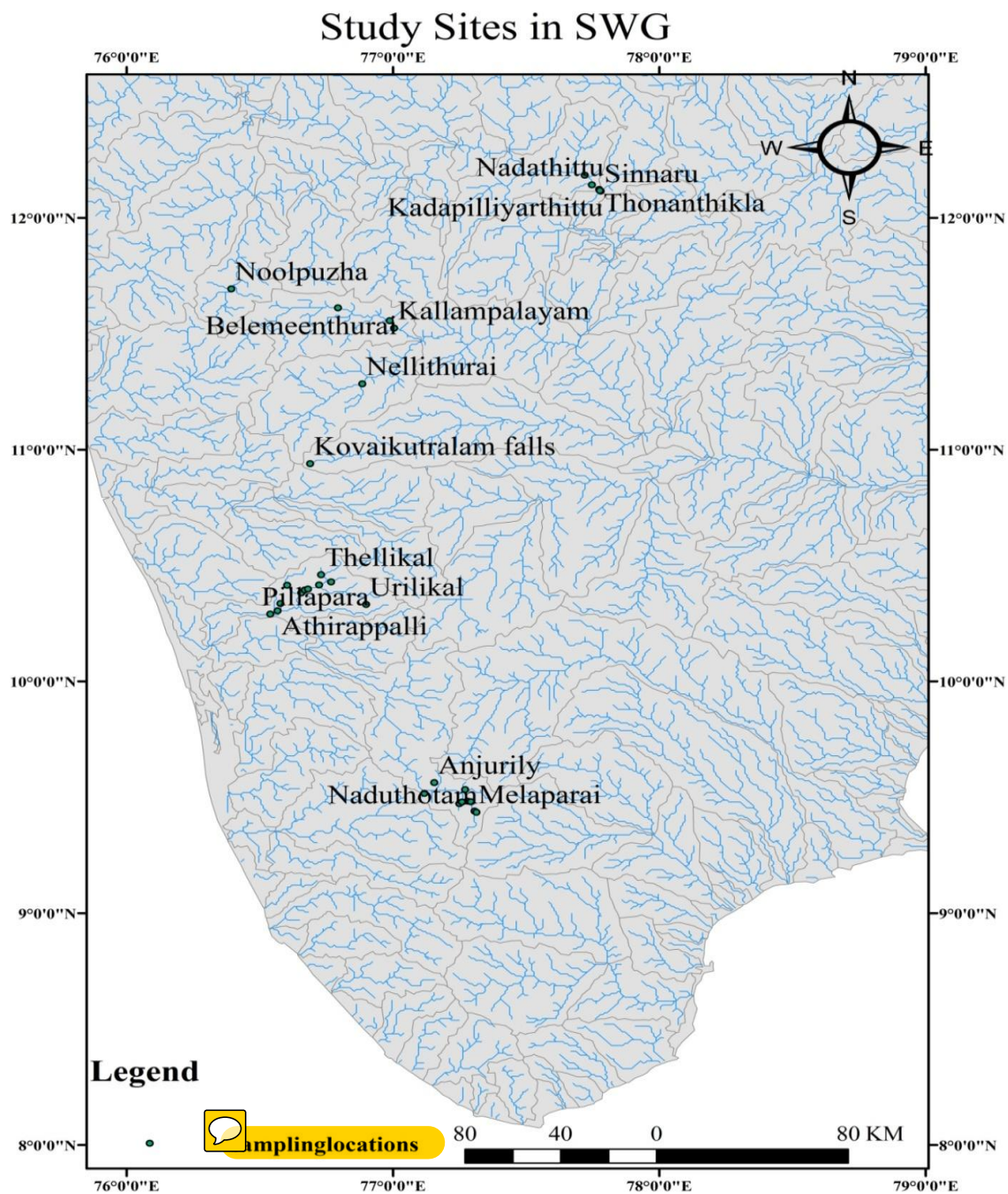


Fig 1: Collection location of six river systems

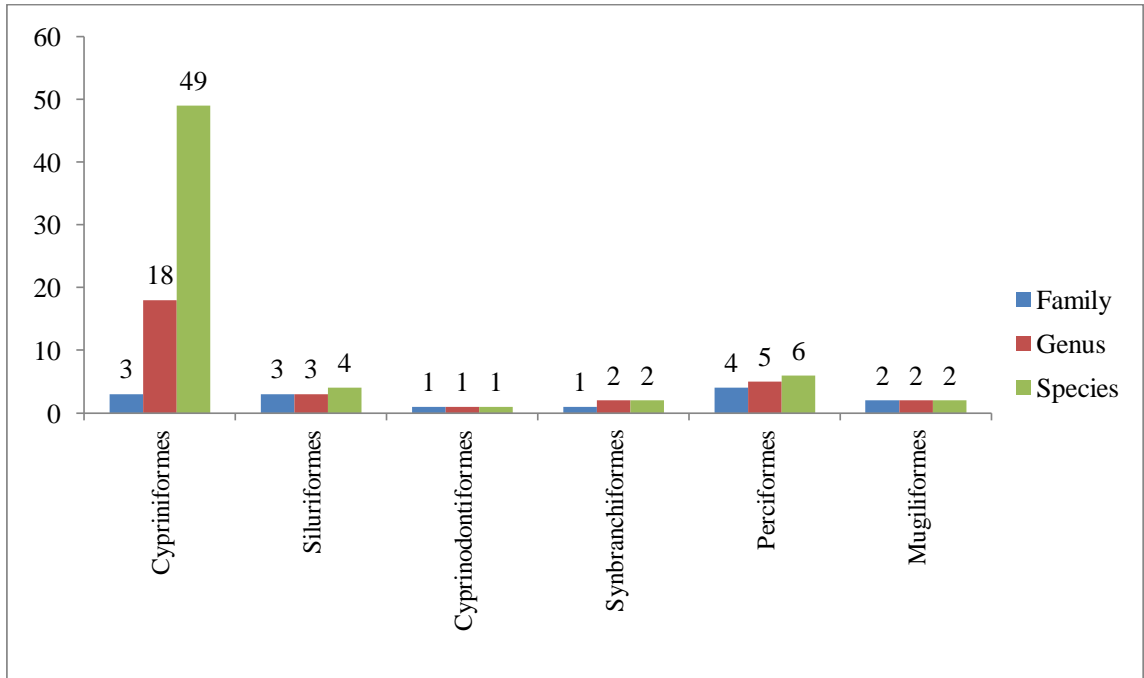
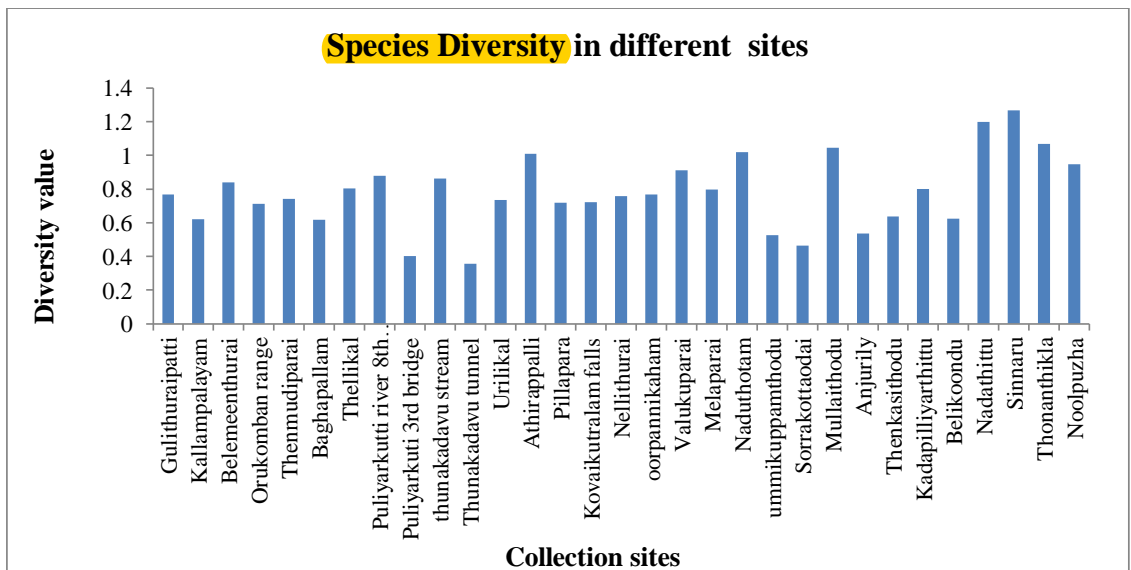


Fig. 2. Representation of fishes in different order



Species diversity in among 31 sites

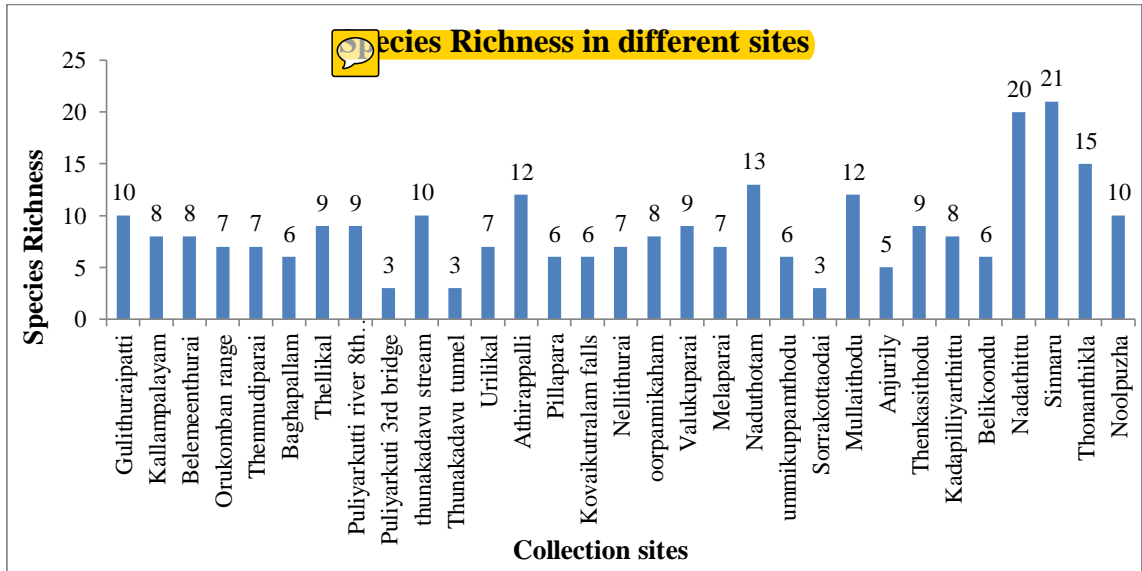
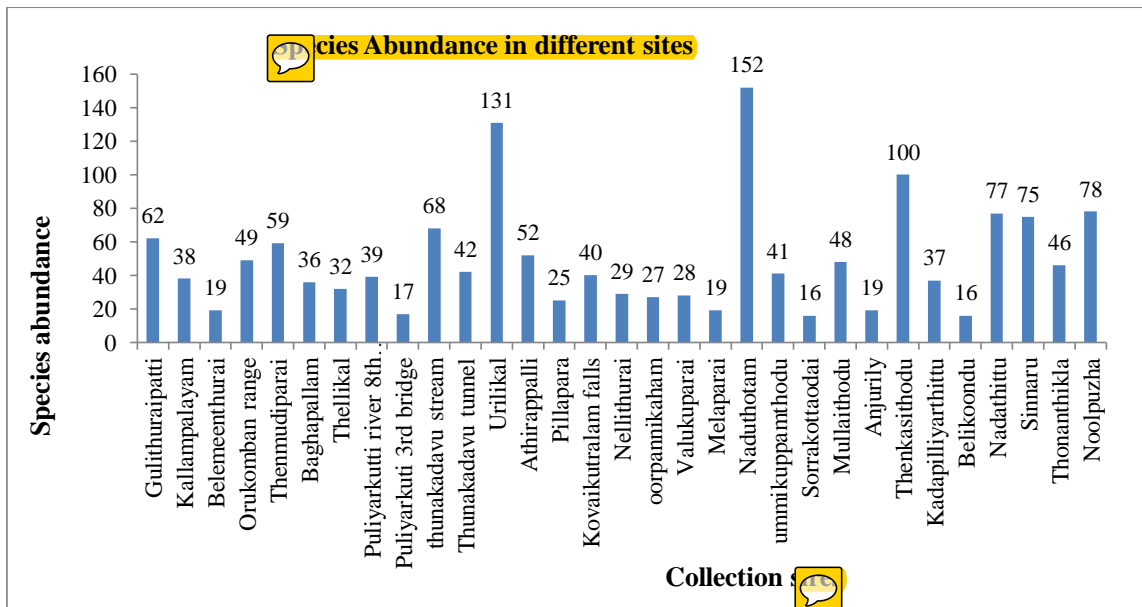


Fig 4: Species richness among 31 sites



Species abundance in among 31 sites

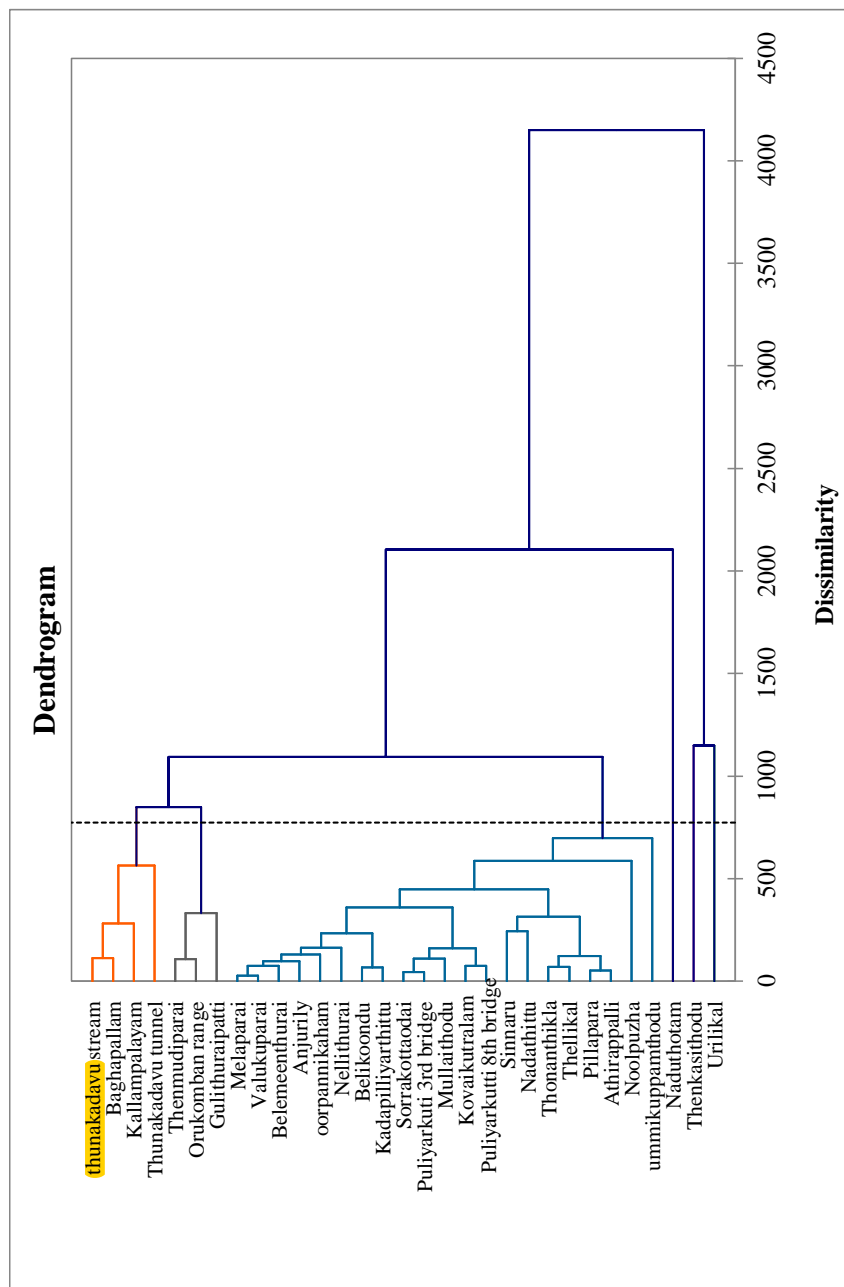


Fig. 6: Cluster dendrogram shows the dissimilarity between 31

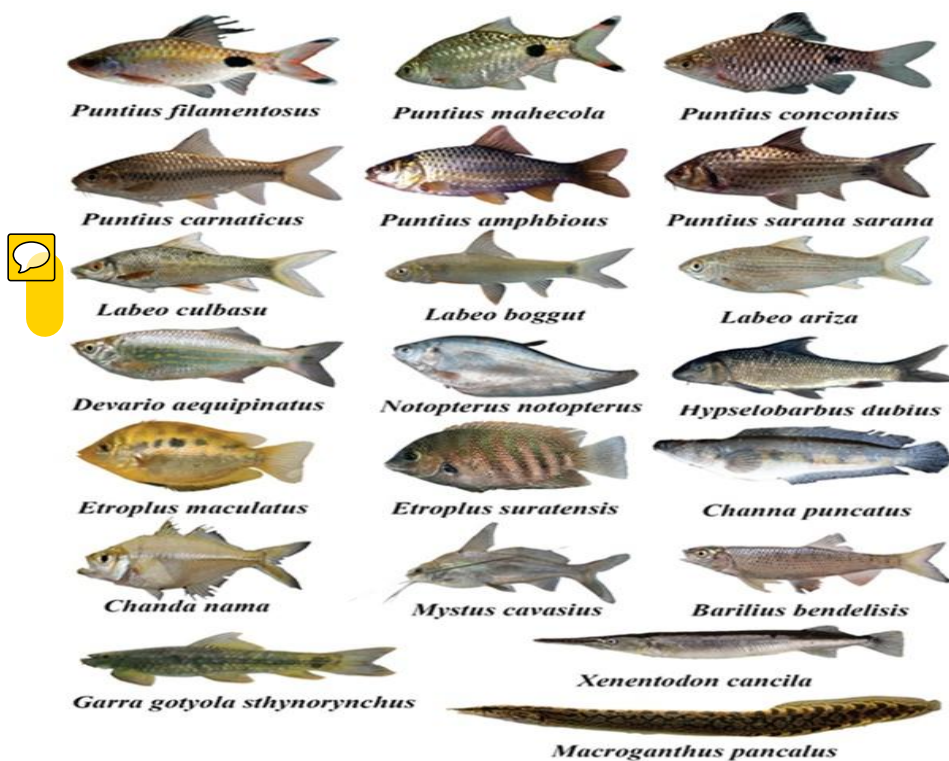


Fig. 7: Fishes collected from various water bodies of SWG