



SPECIES RICHNESS AND COMMUNITY COMPOSITION OF MANGROVES IN THE KOTTAPUZHA ESTUARY, KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Tropical mangrove forests offer a wide range of ecological services and are quite productive. The community structure and diversity of mangroves in the Kottapuzha estuary have received relatively little attention despite the fact that mangroves have been the subject of substantial research in both tropical and subtropical regions of the world. Different community types were discovered, and estimates of the mangroves' community composition and species diversity were made. Six species, including four mangroves and two of their associates, were found scattered around the estuary. Species of *Sonneratia alba* are most prevalent. While *Avicennia officinalis* communities, which are severely saline and stunted, were the least complex and diverse, communities with minimal soil salinity and near proximity to creeks exhibited great complexity and diversity.

Keywords: *Avicennia officinalis*; Kottapuzha estuary; Mangroves; *Sonneratia alba*; Species richness