A SURVEY OF ARACHNIDS (ARANEAE) IN THE MUDFLATS OF KASARAGOD DT., KERALA, INDIA

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Abstract: The current work was conducted during May 2018 to April 2019 to assess and tabulate the species of the order Araneae that are found to survive in the sporadically distributed 50 hectare mangrove regions of the district of Kasaragod. The major mudflats of this region include the lower reaches of Manjeshwaram, Kumbala, Shiriya and Mogral which consist of appreciable stocks of mangroves. The Arachnids have been observed and collected by pitfall trapping, vegetation beating, ground hand collection, aerial hand collection and sweep netting techniques and a total of 19 different species have been identified from this region. The observed species belong to the Families- Tetragnathidae, Sparassidae, Oxyopidae, Thomicidae, Arancidae, Salticidae, Clubioridae and Lycosidae. The most common out of the 19 species observed are *Tetragnatha mandibulata*, *Lycosa sp., Zygeilla melanocrania, Oxyopes sp., and Sparassus sp.* The current study reveals that temperature, humidity, food availability and prey predation have an important role to play in the region and also suggests that the terrestrial faunal associates of the mangrove region tend to harbor most of the invertebrate communities -particularly the Arachnids and Insects and are not necessarily obligatory to the ecosystem, instead are facultative. These factors could have generally inferred to the decline in the number of identified spiders. Alongside, considerable extents of coastal wetlands especially in the Northern region of Kerala have been under the grip of landscape changes and anthropogenic activities, thereby leading to a sweeping degradation and mangrove vegetation fragmentation in the region.

Keywords: Araneae, Arachnids, Spiders, Mangrove, Kasaragod, Pitfall Trapping, Sweep Netting.

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