

DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY OF MANGROVE SPECIES ALONG THE COASTLINE OF KOZHIKODE DT., KERALA.

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Abstract: Kozhikode district of Kerala has been known to have 200 ha of the total mangroves of Kerala. A study was conducted during January 2018 to December 2018 for a period of one year at three major estuarine ecosystems- Beypore -Kallai riverside; Eranhipalam-Kottooly areas (Conolly canal) and Kolavipalam-Kottapuzha estuary and the backwater embayment. During the study period, a total of 25 species of mangroves were identified in all the 3 areas together pre-dominated by *Avicennia officinalis*. The Beypore-Kallai region had only disrupted patches of *Avicennia officinalis* whereas Eranhipalam-Kottooly region had species of *Avicennia*, *Rhizophora*, *Bruguiera*, *Kandelia*, *Excoecaria*, *Acanthus* and few other taxa with sizes and structures varying at different sites. The Kottapuzha estuary of the Kuttiady river and the estuarine embayments harbour fragmented strands of mangroves with species *Sonneratia alba*; *Avicennia officinalis*; *Rhizophora apiculata*; *Bruguiera cylindrical*; *Kandelia candel* and *Acanthus ilicifolius* with other species scattered. These mangrove ecosystems are home to a large number of fauna including rare migratory birds and herpetofauna.

As a matter of fact, mangroves have been noted to have narrowed down continuously in density to scattered patches and linings during the recent times due to large scale developmental activities and vast expansion of the city limits of Kozhikode.

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