

**A SURVEY OF HERPETOFAUNA IN THE MANGROVE WETLANDS OF  
KADALUNDI BIRD SANCTUARY, KOZHİKODE DT., KERALA, INDIA**

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**Abstract**

A survey was carried out from June 2018 to June 2019 to record the herpetofauna surviving in the estuarine Kadalundi Bird Sanctuary, located in Kozhikode District of Kerala. The study area is known to be one of the richest mangrove wetlands of Kerala in terms of flora and fauna. The technique used for the survey was Visual Encounter.

Eleven species of Reptilia were recorded and a single species of Amphibia, belonging to ten families- Chelonidae, Emydidae, Agamidae, Scincidae, Varanidae, Colubridae, Elapidae, Viperidae, Pythonidae, and Ranidae. The identification of *Python molurus* (Indian Rock Python) was a rare find at the reserve. These reptiles were noted to be opportunistic terrestrial habitat feeders. The estuarine habitat makes it the most suitable turtle nesting site of the marine turtle, *Lepidochelys olivacea*. Eggs of *Naja Naja* (Indian Cobra) were spotted amidst the dense mangrove vegetation in termite mounds at the vicinity of water. The lone species of frog *Rana cyanophlyctis* (Schneider) is significantly the only amphibian species having the ability to tolerate the weak salinity factor in the estuarine system distributed in the brackish waters.

This work was done to throw light on the diversity of herpetofauna in the estuarine ecosystem as an important part of the locale that has to be monitored constantly as these mangroves have been reduced to patches and they face a grave threat posed by indiscriminate sand mining and constructional activities. The study was focused upon its essentiality to determine the species composition of amphibian and reptile communities as they are essential bioindicators.