

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON MIGRATORY BIRDS ON THE ISLAND OF MANDAITIVU, JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

Packiyathan Rajkumar^{1*} and Chaminda Wijesundara²

¹*Posgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

**vpraj82@gmail.com*

Migratory birds are regularly present in the Jaffna peninsula from September to April. No previous studies have been carried out in the Jaffna peninsula on the diversity and abundance of migratory bird species, mostly due to the security status of the area in the past. Proper scientific studies are essential for the effective management of these species. The objective of the present study was to identify the major migratory bird species on the Island of Mandaitivu, which is notable for its bird diversity among the other islands in the Jaffna peninsula, as well as being a major mangrove habitat in the area. The dominant types of vegetation on Mandaitivu are marshlands and mangrove habitats, which provide suitable habitats for migratory birds. The present study was carried out from September to November 2013. Point transects were used to count birds. Peak counting hours were between 0630 and 0830 h each day, and counts were taken weekly. A 10 km² area was selected from each habitat and six sampling points were selected using simple random sampling. A minimum distance of approximately 100 m was kept between points to avoid pseudoreplication. Birds were counted for 20 minutes at each point, using binoculars. Nine species of migratory birds were identified. The most abundant species was the gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) (total count: 192). Among the other abundant species were common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) (93), Richard's pipit (*Anthus richardi*) (33), and common redshank (*Tringa totanus*) (27). The highly endangered slender-billed curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*) (1) and the spoonbilled sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*) (3), both of which are winter vagrants to Sri Lanka, the very rare wood snipe (*Gallinago nemoricola*) (1), wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) (2), and pintail snipe (*Gallinago stenura*) (3) were also observed during this study. Given the large number of birds species (both migrant and resident) present in this area and the ecotouristic potential it holds, the Mandaitivu Island is undoubtedly an important area for bird conservation.