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**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BUTTERFLY FAUNA IN THREE
DIFFERENT HABITATS OF THE KNUCKLES REGION, SRILANKA**

A PROJECT REPORT PRESENTED BY

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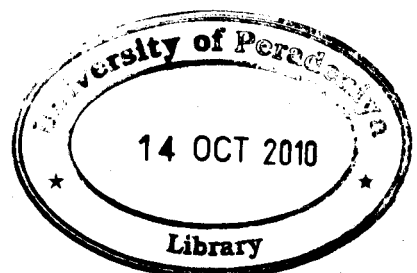
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Butterflies can be considered as biological indicators to assess the health of a habitat. They respond qualitatively and quantitatively to environmental and habitat changes. Knuckles region is considered as a pristine environment within the small island of Sri Lanka.

However, due to the increase of human population health of the habitat within this region is deteriorating. In the present study, butterfly composition was measured in three different habitats along a degradation gradient in Riparian forest, Forest margin and Home garden and Agricultural lands. The different habitats which undergo different degree of anthropogenic disturbances were selected for the study. Butterfly diversity and abundance were recorded with the diversity of butterfly larval host plants in each habitat.

In total 102 species were identified from three different habitats. It was found that the abundance of butterflies was high in natural forest and home gardens and agricultural lands also appear to provide a better habitat. However, the both abundance and diversity of butterflies were low in forest margin. Therefore it can be considered that the marginal habitat which undergoes transition stages of environmental changes does not support the butterfly fauna as the other two habitats. However further quantitative studies should be carried out using replicates to find the butterflies to use them as a measure of habitat degradation.

