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ASSESSING THE MAMMALIAN ASSEMBLAGE OF MADURU OYA NATIONAL PARK USING CAMERA TRAPS

E.G.D.P. JAYASEKARA¹, M.R. MOHOMAD², H.M. SURANGA LAKSHITHA², G.K.V.P.T. SILVA¹ and W.A.D. MAHAULPATHA^{1*}

¹*Department of Zoology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura*

²*Department of Wildlife Conservation, Maduru Oya National Park*

mahaulpatha@sjp.ac.lk*

ABSTRACT

Maduru Oya (588 km²) is the third largest national park in Sri Lanka.. Since its establishment in 1983, the park has become a sanctuary for a rich faunal assemblage including many important mammalian species. This research was carried out with the objective of updating existing knowledge on the occurrence of medium and large sized terrestrial mammals within the park. Camera trap surveys were conducted in a systematic random method covering all the available habitat types. Vehicle and line transects were also carried out. Fifteen camera traps were deployed from December 2018 to May 2019. Trap locations were changed every 30 days and cameras were functioning both day and night 24 hours a day. Delay time was set to one minute and both photo and video capturing were used. The total survey effort was 2160 trap nights during which a total of 27 medium and large sized mammal species were recorded. They belonged to 7 orders and 15 families. Even though the park is largely known for wild elephants, three rare and threatened cat species (Rusty spotted cat, Sri Lankan Leopard and Fishing cat), were recorded during the survey; the latter two species are in the IUCN Endangered category. Another important observation was the presence of Sloth bear which hasn't been recorded recently from the park. Thick-tailed pangolin and Barking deer were two of the uncommon species that were recorded. The diversity of habitats that are present within the Maduru Oya National Park provides shelter for a considerable fraction of the islands medium and large sized mammals. The geographical location of the park has also allowed it to act as a linkage between some of the wet and intermediate zone fauna and the dry zone fauna. The proper management of this protected area and the implementation of relevant conservation measures will ensure the survival of these valuable mammalian species as well as their natural habitats

KEYWORDS: Camera trapping, Meso-mammals, large mammals, Mammalia, Maduru Oya