

Mixed species of birds flocks at two altitudes in the northern flank of the Knuckles region, Central Province of Sri Lanka

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Mixed species flocks of birds were investigated in two altitudes [Riverstan (1350m altitude and 6 km²) and Pitawalapatana area (750m altitude and 5 km²)] at Knuckles Region in Central Province of Sri Lanka with the objectives of studying the flocking behavior and composition in the same geographical location but different altitudes. Monthly transect (1 km) counts were made between April and October 1998. A total of 25 and 20 Mixed Species Flocks were encountered at Riverstan and Pitawalapatana area respectively during the study period. The composition of mixed species flocks were different at the two sites, the percentage of flock species contributing to the flocks being higher at Riverstan (36.5%) than at Pitawalapatana area (31%). The number of bird species in flocks at Riverstan and Pitawalapatana area was 18 and 21 respectively. The flock size varied between 3-15 species with a mean value 7.41 ± 1.49 , and 3-17 species with a mean value 9.35 ± 4.87 at Riverstan and Pitawalapatana area respectively. The number of species in a flock (21 species) was positively correlated with the number of individuals in flocks in Pitawalapatana area, but not in Riverstan. The calculated Shannon Weiner diversity index in Pitawalapatana area ($H' = 3.091$) was higher than Riverstan ($H' = 2.89$). The Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher and Sri Lanka Hill White-eye were nuclear species at Riverstan while Tickle's Blue Flycatcher and Common Iora acted as nuclear species at Pitawalapatana area. The Yellow-eared Bulbul, Velvet-fronted nuthatch, Oriental White-eye and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher were regular species at Riverstan and in Pitawalapatana area the Black-crested Bulbul, Sri Lanka Dull-blue Flycatcher, Blue-winged Leaf bird and Yellow-fronted Barbet acted as regular species. The Greenish Warbler and Dark-fronted Babbler were occasional species in both sites. The cluster analysis of different flocks revealed that there were two and four main associations found in Riverstan and Pitawalapatana area respectively.

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