INVASIVE MACRO FLORA AND FAUNA IN MAHAWELI WILDLIFE REGION

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Invasive flora and fauna have been reported to spread rapidly threatening the biodiversity and economic value of natural and agricultural ecosystems in Sri Lanka. Mahaweli Wildlife Region that covers about 200,000 ha of land (protected areas as national parks, nature reserves and sanctuaries) in the dry zone has also affected by these flora and fauna. A preliminary survey was conducted in Maduruoya, Minneriya, Wasgomuwa, Flood plain and Somawathiya national parks, Riverine and Minneriya/Girithale nature reserves and Polonnaruwa sanctuary to identify the commonly listed invasive macro flora and fauna by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Sri Lanka and their distribution in the region through field observation and personal communication.

The results revealed that there were 6 species of fauna (Tank fish-*Hypostomus plecostomus*, Thilapia-*Sarotherodon mossambicus*, Gient African snail-*Achatina fulica*, House rat-*Ratus ratus* and Feral buffalo-*Bubalus bubalus*, Snake skin gouramy – *Trichogaster pactoralis* , *Trichogaster pectotalis*) and 8 species of flora (Water hyasinth-*Eichornia crassipes*, Salvinia-*Salvinia molesta*, Prickly lantana-*Lantana camara*, Podisinghomarang-*Eupatorium odoratum*, *Mimosa invisa*, Ipil Ipil-*Leucaenea leucocephala*, Hydrilla-*Hydrilla verticillata* and Illuk-*Imperata cylindrica*) out of 43 species of exotic invasive biota listed by the IUCN, Sri Lanka. The Tank fish out of 6 fauna species recorded in the study has not been recorded previously in this region. It was also found that one plant species, commonly called as Agada(*Xanthium indicum*) which is not in the IUCN list, were appeared to be major threats in this aspect in the region. It was also observed that several invasive plant species had positive impacts on some faunal groups such as insects, amphibians reptiles and birds.

This paper discusses the common invasive species and their impact on the biodiversity and economic value and legal issues and offer suggestions for further research in the region for sound wildlife management