

Effect of tourism on biodiversity in the coastal environment; A study of Bentota area in the south–western coastline in Sri Lanka

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Coastal environment is an amenity which has high scenic value and gives great enjoyment and pleasure for mankind. As a result most of the tourists have selected coastal areas as their desirable holiday destinations. However, growth of coastal tourism has created many environment problems at the present. Destruction of biodiversity is one of the major problem amongst them. Persistence of biodiversity is very important for maintaining ecological balance of coastal environment. Similarly these environment provide unique ecological services such as sediment storage and transport, water filtration, providing habitats for coastal species and functional links between terrestrial and marine environments.

The objective of this research was to find out effects of tourism on biodiversity in the coastal environments. South-western coastline between Bentota and Kosgoda river outfalls was purposively selected as the study area. Stratified random sampling method was applied for the collecting primary data in this research. The sample consists of three groups as adjoining households, workers in the tourist hotels and tourist guides. In addition field observation was made to gather further information. Secondary data were collected from publish and unpublished sources and websites. Raw data was analyzed by using statistical techniques available in Microsoft Excel Software.

It was reveals that the local people collect turtle eggs and sell them as income source, threatening the extinction of this endangered turtles. The removal of sea grass and other plants to make open beaches for recreations was seen as another destructive action. It accelerates coastal erosion and loss of the habitat for coastal species. Some tourist hotels empty their sewage and other waste directly into sea water.

The study found, some tourism related activities has threatened the coastal species. Also these activities are caused to sensitive coastal environment destruction. Raising awareness about value of coastal environment among the local population, especially involve owners and other responsible persons of the hotels and visitors, strengthening control measures and enforcement of environmental regulation and standards would helped to protect these coastal habitat for sustainable tourism development.

Key words: Coastal environment, Biodiversity, Tourism, South-western coastline

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