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Freshwater fish diversity of north flowing rivers Son and Tons of Uttar Pradesh: Habitat, threats and conservation prospects

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Fish diversity, distribution and abundance with environmental parameters from the upstream and downstream parts of two major north flowing major rivers Son and Tons of Uttar Pradesh were investigated. Overall 61 fish species representing 17 families were collected and Cyprinidae was recorded as the most dominated family represented by 23 species. The threatened status category of 61 fish species according to the IUCN Red List Criteria 2012 revealed seven species under near threatened, three species under not evaluated, one under vulnerable (VU) and one under data deficient category. The remaining species were categorized under least concern. The considerable difference between the relative abundance of fishes of both the rivers were observed ($p<0.05$). The abundance and distribution of *Mastacembelus* was recorded highest in the river Tons followed by *Labeo rohita, Rasbora daniconius* and *Labeo bata*. These species were noticed comparatively lower in the river Son and abundance of species like *Rita rita, Sperata seenghala, Rasbora daniconius* and *Puntius sophore* were found higher. Further, the considerable variations between the fish diversity of these rivers were also noticed ($p<0.05$). Both fish diversity and species richness showed inverse relationship with respect to altitude. The present study shows that these rivers support considerable fish diversity with 3.8% vulnerability, which is important for the conservation besides supporting considerable carnivorous (50-62.5%), omnivores (16.6-29.2%) and herbivores (8.1-16.6%, 3.8-8.3%) species.

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