

## PHYTODIVERSITY OF HERBACEOUS FLORA IN THE GRASSLANDS OF JANNARAM DIVISION, KAWAL TIGER RESERVE, TELANGANA, INDIA.

### ABSTRACT

**Aims :** To study the diversity and composition of herbaceous species in the grasslands of Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana, India..

**Place and Duration of Study:** Grasslands of Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana, July 2022 to August 2023.

**Methodology:** The study was carried out by laying out 223 sample plots in the Jannaram division by dividing Jannaram division into 3 ranges. The plot size was 1 x 1 m. Varied diversity indices such as Simpson, Shannon–Weiner, species evenness, and IVI were calculated according to standard formulae. vegetation analysis and IVI value of each species were calculated and analysed.

**Results :** A total of 65 species, comprising 53 genera and 21 families, were reported. The dominant family in the study area was Poaceae, followed by Fabaceae, Malvaceae, Acanthaceae, Asteraceae and Euphorbiaceae. The Shannon–Weiner index was 3.46 and the Simpson index was 0.05, indicating high diversity with less dominance of herb layer in the study area. Top five species holding highest IVI value are *Iseilema laxum* (29.94), *Cynodon barberi* (12.19), *Eragrostis amabilis* (12.15), *Dichanthium annulatum* (11.20), and *Apludamutica* (10.21).

**Conclusions** –This research produced fundamental information regarding the types of herbaceous plants and grasses present at the Jannaram, Kawal Tiger Reserve. This would serve as a guide to the systematists, ethnobotanists, amongst several others researchers who are interested in identifying.

**Key words :** Importance Value Index, Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Phytosociology, Shannon–Weiner index and Simpson index.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Phytosociology is a subfield of vegetation science that studies plant communities within defined spatial units, most commonly vegetation stands. Its primary goals are to define and describe different species of vegetation by thoroughly analysing their entire floral makeup. This field studies numerous plant life forms and evaluates analytical qualities such as frequency, density, abundance, evenness, Importance Value Index (IVI), and diversity indexes. These evaluations aid in evaluating various factors and determining the most productive ones[1]. Grasslands are vegetation covers with an abundance of non-woody plants, which includes certain savannas, forests, and grasslands[2]. Grasslands, which occupy 30% of the planet's surface, are among the world's largest ecosystems.

They can be found in every region of the world, with Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia having the highest total area covered by grasslands, with 14.5 and 8.9 million km<sup>2</sup>, respectively. They are most common in semi-arid regions (28% of the world's grasslands), wet regions (23%), cold regions (20%), and desert regions (19%)[3]. Out of the 136 terrestrial ecoregions recognized for their ecological significance, 35 are characterized as grasslands, showcasing the richness and diversity of this ecosystem. Around 4,500 relatively large protected areas, constituting at least 50% of such designated areas, are identified as grasslands. These protected grasslands encompass roughly 4 million square kilometers, equivalent to about 3% of the total land area. However, this comprises only 7.6% of the entire grassland area[3].

When it comes to carbon storage, grasslands play a significant role, holding approximately 34% of the global carbon stock found in terrestrial ecosystems. In comparison, forests store 39% of this carbon, while agro-ecosystems account for 17%. Unlike tropical forests where the vegetation is the primary source of carbon storage, a major portion of carbon in grasslands is stored within the soil[2]. The biodiversity of grasslands includes a wide range of items that are valuable to humans[4].

Major grassland characteristics include species richness and composition. Plant life-forms, vegetation structure and dynamics, and primary productivity are all investigated and interact closely with herbivore grazing and play an important role in determining the biodiversity and ecosystem function of grasslands[5,6]. Although herbaceous vegetation accounts for less than 1% of forest biomass, it encompasses over 90% of plant species and produces up to 20% of foliar litter[7]. The herbaceous layer has the highest species richness of any forest stratum, yet threat level estimates for arboreal species are frequently reported [8,9,10]. Understanding phytosociological parameters such as diversity indices, species diversity, species richness, species evenness, and distribution patterns is crucial for effective and sustainable management of grassland ecosystems. These analytical results offer a thorough insight into species composition, intricate relationships between various communities and ecosystems, resource sustainability, and how environmental factors influence ecosystem changes. To ensure the long-term preservation of biodiversity within these ecosystems, it's imperative to develop and implement appropriate management practices informed by this understanding.

In this context, the aim of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding and analyze the structure of vegetation, along with assessing species diversity and composition within the grassland ecosystems. as well as which is crucial for the efficient management of forests.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Study area

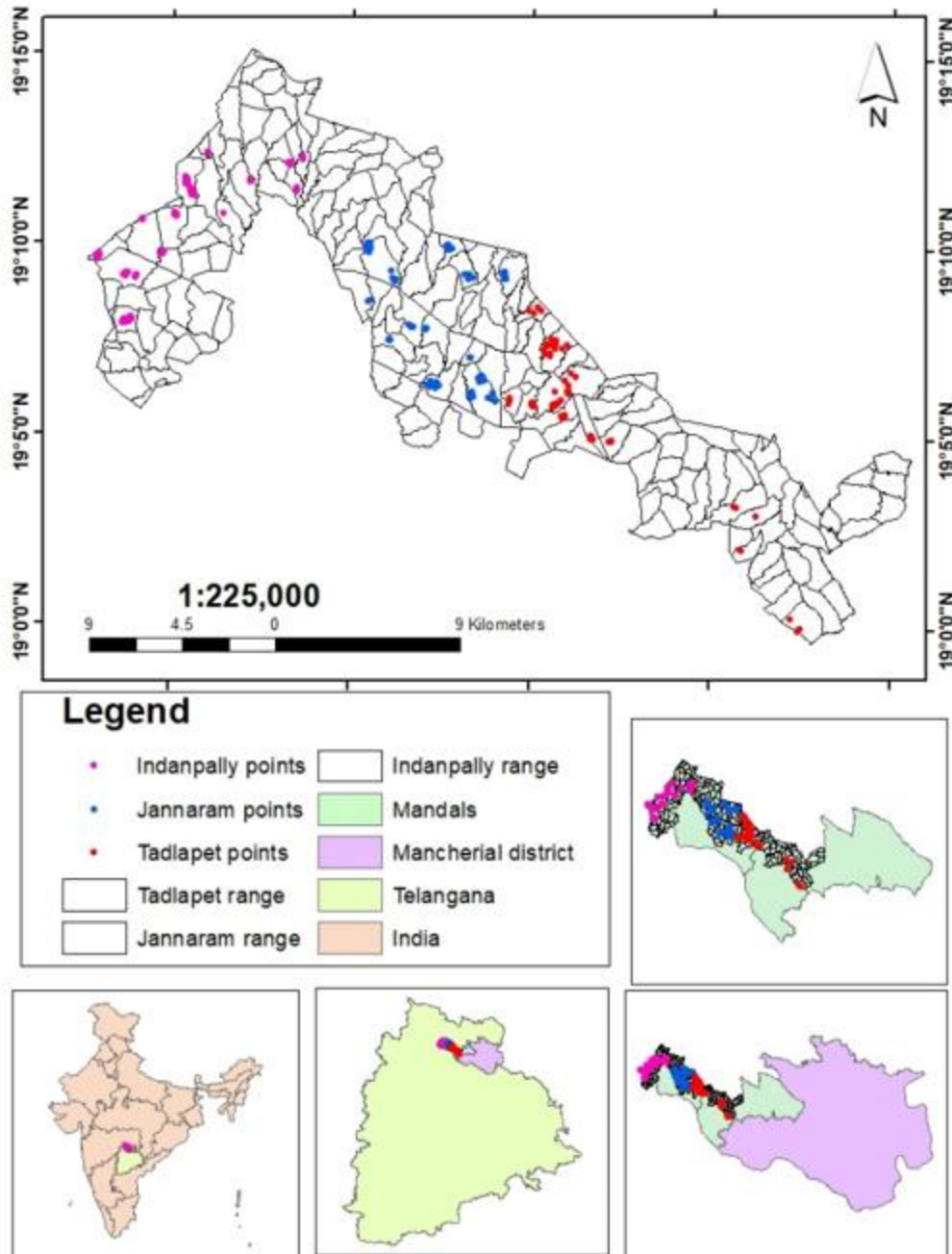
The present study was carried out in the Jannaram Division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana during 2022-23 (July-August). Geographically, the Jannaram Division was located on 19.11889490 N and 78.99897340 E in Mancherial District of Telangana State, is spread over an area of 893 km<sup>2</sup>. It has a dry deciduous forest type with a few tiny grasslands [11].

The BirsaiPET plateau, situated in the northwestern corner of this division, stands at an elevation of 396 meters above sea level. This plateau features a rolling terrain and its waters flow in two directions, ultimately converging into the Peddavagu, which traverses the plateau from the North-East to the South-West. The temperature in this region fluctuates between 15°C and 45°C. The division experiences an average annual rainfall of 750 mm, received mainly from the southwest monsoon. Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary boasts approximately 30 seasonal streams within its boundaries. This area plays a crucial role as a catchment area for numerous streams that eventually flow into the Kaddam reservoir and the Godavari River. Additionally, both inside and outside the Reserve Forest, there are numerous small, medium, and large tanks distributed across the division [12].

The study area was inventoried by laying of 223 sample plots on the basis of stratified random sampling method, dividing the Division into 3 ranges with a standard sampling intensity method. The phytosociological analysis of each sample grid of division was conducted by using randomly chosen 1 x 1 m plots.

Fig1 is the map showing study area, depicting three ranges and the inventory points laid to conduct the phytodiversity survey of herbaceous flora in the grasslands of Jannaram Division, Kawal Tiger Reserve.

## Experimental study area of Jannaram division



**Fig1: Map of the study area, Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana.**

### 2.2 Statistical Analysis

Several quantitative indices have been designed to provide information on different aspects of biodiversity viz. The Simpson Index [13]. Shannon–Weiner Index [13, 14]. IVI and Margalef Index [15]. The indices provide the biodiversity values and help to compare it between plant communities or ecosystems. The equations are as follows:

#### 2.2.1 Simpson's Diversity Index

$$(D) = 1 - \sum (n/N)^2 \text{ [13].}$$

where n = the total number of organisms of a particular species

N = the total number of organisms of all species

### **2.2.2 Shannon Diversity index**

$$(H) = \sum p_i \ln p_i \text{ (or) } H' = -\sum (n_i / N) \times \log (n_i / N) \text{ [13, 14].}$$

where  $p_i$  = The proportion of the entire community made up of species  $i$

The diversity of species increases in a given community with increasing H value and vice versa.

### **2.2.3 Species Evenness Index**

$$(E_H) = H / \ln(S) \text{ [15]}$$

where H = Shannon Diversity Index, S = The total number of unique species

This value ranges from 0 to 1.

### **2.2.4 Margalef Index**

$$(D) = (S-1) / \ln N \text{ [16].}$$

where S = No. of species in a sample and N = the total individuals

### **2.2.5 Important Value Index (IVI)**

The analysis of the vegetation data was done using characters such as Abundance (A), Frequency (F), Density (D), Relative Density (RD), Relative Frequency (RF), Relative Abundance (RA), and Importance Value Index (IVI) in accordance with the standard formulae.

$$\text{Frequency (\%)} = \frac{\text{No. of quadrats in which species occurred}}{\text{Total no. of Sampling Unit Studied}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Relative Frequency} = \frac{\text{Frequency of the species}}{\text{Total frequency of all species}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Density} = \frac{\text{No. of individuals of the species}}{\text{Total area studied}}$$

$$\text{Relative density} = \frac{\text{Density of the species}}{\text{Total density of all the species}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Abundance} = \frac{\text{Total no. of individuals of the species in all quadrats}}{\text{No. of quadrats in which species occurred}}$$

$$\text{Relative abundance} = \frac{\text{Abundance of individual species}}{\text{Total abundance of all species}} \times 100$$

IVI is calculated by adding relative density, relative abundance, and relative frequency values for each species [17, 18].

Important Value Index (IVI) = Relative Abundance + Relative Density + Relative Frequency

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Vegetation composition

Herbaceous vegetation present in grasslands of the study revealed following composition as depicted in the table 1 below. It revealed a total of 65 species of herbs were present belonging to 21 families whose importance value index is shown in the table 1.

Table 1. Showing the IVI of the study area

S. No	Name of the Species	RF	RD	RA	IVI
1	<i>Aeschynomene indica</i> L	0.46	0.27	1.10	1.83
2	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i> (L.) L	2.77	1.28	0.87	4.93
3	<i>Allmanianodiflora</i> (L.) R. Br. ex Wight	0.28	0.10	0.70	1.08
4	<i>Alloteropsiscimicina</i> (L.) Stapf	0.19	0.35	3.54	4.07
5	<i>Alternantherasessilis</i> (L.) R. Br. ex DC.	2.68	3.01	2.12	7.80
6	<i>Alysicarpushamosus</i> Edgew.	0.74	0.42	1.08	2.24
7	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> (Burm.f.) Nees	0.09	0.09	1.84	2.02
8	<i>Apludamutica</i> L	2.86	4.43	2.92	10.21
9	<i>Aristida setacea</i> Retz	1.66	1.32	1.50	4.49
10	<i>Biophytumsensitivum</i> (L.) DC	0.83	0.33	0.76	1.92
11	<i>Blepharisintegrifolia</i> (L. fil.) E. Mey. & Drege	0.65	0.27	0.79	1.70
12	<i>Blumeaaxillaris</i> (Lam.) DC.	0.09	0.03	0.52	0.64
13	<i>Blumealacera</i> (Burm.f.) DC	1.85	0.66	0.67	3.17
14	<i>Bothriochloabladhii</i> (Retz.) S.T.Blake	0.19	0.27	2.75	3.21
15	<i>Brachiariadistachya</i> (L.) Stapf	0.65	0.76	2.21	3.61
16	<i>Brachiariaramosa</i> (L.) Stapf	1.20	1.52	2.38	5.10
17	<i>Chloris barbata</i> Sw	2.22	2.68	2.28	7.18
18	<i>Chloris virgata</i> Sw	2.22	2.84	2.42	7.47
19	<i>Chrysopogonfulvus</i> (Spreng.) Chiov	1.75	1.90	2.04	5.70
20	<i>Cleome viscosa</i> L	1.75	0.82	0.88	3.46
21	<i>Commelinabenghalensis</i> L	1.85	1.17	1.19	4.21
22	<i>Corchorus aestuans</i> L	0.09	0.01	0.26	0.37

23	<i>Cynodon barberi</i> Rang. &Tadul.	2.49	5.52	4.18	12.19
24	<i>Cyperus compressus</i> L.	0.92	0.91	1.86	3.70
25	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> L.	0.55	0.48	1.62	2.65
26	<i>Dactylocteniumaegyptium</i> (L.) Willd	3.51	3.17	1.71	8.39
27	<i>Desmodiumgangeticum</i> (L.) DC	0.09	0.03	0.52	0.64
28	<i>Dichanthiumannulatum</i> (Forssk.) Stapf	3.05	5.03	3.12	11.20
29	<i>Digitariaabludens</i> (Roem. &Schult.) Veldkamp	1.11	0.98	1.66	3.75
30	<i>Digitariabicornis</i> (Lam.) Roem. &Schult.	3.42	3.44	1.90	8.76
31	<i>Dinebraretroflexa</i> (Vahl) Panz	2.03	1.75	1.62	5.40
32	<i>Drimia indica</i> (Roxb.) Jessop	0.09	0.03	0.52	0.64
33	<i>Eleusine indica</i> (L.) Gaertn	1.85	1.49	1.52	4.86
34	<i>Eragrostisamabilis</i> (L.) Wight &Arn	4.25	5.47	2.43	12.15
35	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L	2.86	1.86	1.23	5.95
36	<i>Euphorbia indica</i> Lam	1.11	0.77	1.31	3.19
37	<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> (L.) R. Br.	2.49	0.90	0.68	4.07
38	<i>Heteropogon contortus</i> (L.) P.Beauv. exRoem. &Schult	3.60	3.61	1.89	9.10
39	<i>Hybanthus enneaspermus</i> (L.) F.Muell	0.09	0.09	1.84	2.02
40	<i>Hygrophila auriculata</i> (Schumach.) Heine	2.12	0.66	0.58	3.36
41	<i>Iphigenia indica</i> (L.) A.Gray ex Kunth	0.09	0.01	0.26	0.37
42	<i>Iseilema laxum</i> Hack	8.86	17.38	3.70	29.94
43	<i>Justicia prostrata</i> (Roxb. ex C.B.Clarke) Gamble	0.37	0.30	1.51	2.17
44	<i>Justicia glauca</i> Rottler	3.69	3.37	1.72	8.78
45	<i>Leucas aspera</i> (Willd.) Link	2.59	0.91	0.67	4.16
46	<i>Melanocenchrisjacquemontii</i> Jaub. &Spach	0.28	0.26	1.75	2.28
47	<i>Mollugo pentaphylla</i> L	0.19	0.15	1.57	1.91
48	<i>Murdanniaspirata</i> (L.) G.Brückn	0.74	0.53	1.34	2.61
49	<i>Oldenlandiaumbellata</i> L.	0.37	0.31	1.57	2.25
50	<i>Oplismenusburmanni</i> (Retz.) P.Beauv	1.66	2.57	2.91	7.14
51	<i>Pentanemaindicum</i> (L.)	2.96	1.08	0.69	4.72
52	<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> L	1.02	0.76	1.41	3.18
53	<i>Phyllanthus virgatus</i> G. Forst.	1.94	2.00	1.95	5.89
54	<i>Senna tora</i> (L.) Roxb	1.20	0.60	0.95	2.75
55	<i>Senna uniflora</i> (Mill.) H.S.Irwin&Barneby	0.46	0.14	0.58	1.18
56	<i>Setariapumila</i> (Poir.) Roem. &Schult	1.57	1.66	1.99	5.22
57	<i>Setariaverticillata</i> (L.) P.Beauv.	0.74	0.85	2.16	3.75
58	<i>Sida acuta</i> Burm.f	0.74	0.27	0.69	1.70
59	<i>Sida cordata</i> (Burm.f.) Borss.Waalk	1.66	0.68	0.77	3.12
60	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> L	0.46	0.15	0.63	1.25
61	<i>Solanum surattense</i> Burm. F	1.11	0.31	0.52	1.94
62	<i>Spermacoceocymoides</i> Burm.f	0.09	0.03	0.52	0.64
63	<i>Themedaquadri-valvis</i> (L.) Kuntze	1.75	2.99	3.22	7.96

64	<i>Tridax procumbens</i> (L.) L	2.68	1.98	1.39	6.05
65	<i>Zornia diphylla</i> (L.) Pers	0.09	0.03	0.52	0.64
		100.00	100.00	100.00	300.00

The IVI values of the top five herbaceous plants in the Jannaram division are as follows in decreasing order are *Iseilema laxum* (29.94) > *Cynodon barberi* (12.19) > *Eragrostis amabilis* (12.15) > *Dichanthium annulatum* (11.20) > *Apludamutica* (10.21) (Table 1).

### 3.2 Diversity indices

Estimation of diversity through varied indices helps in estimating the species diversity, evenness and dominance. Simpson index determines the dominance whereas Shannon-Weiner and Margalef indices expressing diversity with Evenness index expressing evenness of the herbaceous flora as shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Species diversity indices of the Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana.**

Diversity indices	Value
Simpson index (D)	0.05
Shannon-Weiner's index (H')	3.46
Species Evenness index	0.50
Margalef's diversity index (R)	7.14

The Simpson index in this area was 0.05 following low dominance of the species in the study area. The Shannon-Wiener's diversity index in the area was 3.46 indicating high diversity herb layer in the Jannaram division. The various other indices have been shown in the table 2.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Herb species abundance

The species composition of Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana found in 223 quadrats (Observed as 65 species belonging to 53 genera representing 21 families) was higher than other research studies by different authors work, i.e., 53 herb species in Hulikal Ghat region, central Western Ghats, Karnataka [19], 30 herb species belonging to 19 families in Archeological Museum Campus – Kochi [20], 30 herb species belonging to 19 families in the sacred groves of Perumudiyoor, Kerala [21]. However, the herb species diversity was comparatively better and five major herb species

were dominated and occupied majority of the Jannaram division. However, considering the results of these similar studies, it can be concluded that the Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve possesses relatively well-diversified natural forests with higher number of herb species.

UNDER PEER REVIEW

## 4.2 Diversity indices

The values of Shannon–Wiener's diversity index (3.46) and Species evenness index (0.50) of the reserve indicate effective and resulting in consideration of conservation and sustainable management of the area. The value of Margalef's diversity index (7.14) indicates proficient presence of tree species in the area. The value of Simpson's index (0.05) also indicates the less dominance of herb species. These results were higher than similar study by other authors, i.e., Shannon Wiener Diversity Index (H) is observed as 2.28 and Evenness index is 0.45 in Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, Western Ghats, Southern India [22], Shannon Weiner diversity Index (H') is 1.80695667 in the sacred groves of Perumudiyoor, Kerala[20].

## 4.3 Phytosociological characters of the herb species

The IVI value indicates a complete picture of phytosociological character of a species in the community [23]. The highest IVI was found for *Iseilema laxum* (29.94), *Cynodon barberi* (12.19), *Eragrostis amabilis* (12.15), *Dichanthium annulatum* (11.20), and *Apludamutica* (10.21). The IVI value of *Iseilema laxum* indicates that the majority of the study area is dominated by *Iseilema laxum*.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The present titled Phytodiversity of herbaceous flora in the grasslands of Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Telangana, India aims at evaluating the herbaceous flora present in the grasslands studied. This research produced fundamental information regarding the types of herbaceous plants and grasses present at the Jannaram division, Kawal Tiger Reserve. The study also revealed importance values, their evenness, diversity viz., species composition of the investigation site. This would serve as a guide to the systematists, ethnobotanists, amongst several others researchers who are interested in identifying.

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