

Short Research Article

Rapid Assessment of Riparian Vegetation at Calyawan River, Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Davao de Oro Province, Philippines

Abstract

Aims: The objective of this study was to examine the vegetation found along the riverbanks of the Calyawan River in Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro, Philippines using the transect walk method. The goals were to determine the variety and abundance of the flora along the riverbank, evaluate the conservation status of the discovered plant species, and suggest measures for safeguarding and preserving the riparian environment.

Study Design: The study employed a transect walk method to carry out an initial survey of the riparian vegetation. A 1-kilometer transect was conducted along the riverbanks of the Calyawan River to gather qualitative and quantitative measurements of plant diversity. The evaluation took place on December 20, 2022. This approach facilitated a quick and systematic examination of the vegetation along the riverbanks.

Place and Duration: The study was carried out on the riverbanks of the Calyawan River in Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro. The fieldwork was conducted on December 20, 2022. The region can be reached by using the Compostela-Montevista-Mati Boundary Road.

Methodology: The transect walk approach was employed to record the riparian flora during the survey. Plant species were identified and photographed, but no tangible plant specimens were collected. The obtained data encompassed the identification of fern and angiosperm taxa and families encountered along the transect. The conservation status assessments were conducted using the pre-existing classifications of the species.

Results: A rapid assessment revealed the presence of 49 distinct genera of ferns and angiosperm plants belonging to 30 different families along the transect. Out of these, 74% of the riparian plant genera that were identified were found to be endemic to the region. The assessment of the riparian plants' conservation status indicated that 37% were classed as vulnerable, 30% as least concern, 22% as other threatened species, 10% as endangered, and 1% were not categorized. Although the sample time was short, these findings emphasize the abundance and importance of the riparian flora in terms of conservation.

Conclusion: The initial study conducted along the riverbanks of Calyawan River indicated a notable variety of plants that grow along the river, with a large number of species that are unique to that area. Many identified plants have a conservation status that emphasizes the necessity for heightened sampling efforts and monitoring in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of and safeguard this rich ecosystem. Considering the clear human-induced stresses on the forest fragments in the region, it is advisable to enhance and broaden conservation efforts in order to protect the riparian vegetation and guarantee its ongoing existence.

Keywords: angiosperm, riparian, calyawan river, rapid assessment, vegetation

1. INTRODUCTION

Riparian zones are the areas next to streams and shorelines that link waterways with runoff from higher ground through both surface and underground channels. The biodiversity of these habitats is among the highest of any terrestrial ecosystems found on any of the planet's continents. The geologic and ecoregional setting, the form and distribution of water and sediment supply, connectivity, and the regional species pool are the factors that regulate the physical form, the seasonal and interannual flow and sediment regime, and collectively they define the possibilities and restrictions that are associated with riparian biota [1].

Riparian vegetation, often known as plants growing along the banks, primarily consists of hydrophilic species. Hydrophilic plants have a crucial role in mitigating nonpoint source pollution in rivers and rehabilitating the water quality of degraded streams or rivers [2]. In addition, riparian vegetation has a significant impact on the chemistry of stream water through several means. This includes the direct absorption of chemicals, as well as indirect impacts such as the introduction of organic matter into the soil and channels, changes in water flow, and the stabilization of soil [3]. In general, riparian vegetation serves directly in stabilizing ecological system [4], maintaining water quality [5], and flood mitigation and management [6]. Because riparian habitats are highly diverse, dynamic, and complex settings, there has been global focus on their protection and conservation [7;8].

The Calyawan River, originating in Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro, has not been well explored in terms of its riparian vegetation. The Province of Davao de Oro is now providing financial support for preliminary biodiversity studies, despite the existence of incomplete data in the province. It is worth noting that this province and its towns have been attracting visitors because of the presence of stunning landscapes, a generally cold climate, and captivating freshwater bodies such as rivers and streams.

Riparian vegetation plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance, yet it faces numerous threats from anthropogenic activities. Understanding these dynamics is essential for conservation efforts [4]. Conducting biodiversity surveys is crucial at this time due to the urgent tourist activities at the site. This will enable the development of effective management strategies to preserve the area's scenic views, which are a result of the abundant presence of animals and plants. Additionally, it will help promote ecotourism in the region. Thus, this rapid evaluation of riparian species was conducted primarily in response to the lack of published research on biodiversity, specifically riparian vegetation, in Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

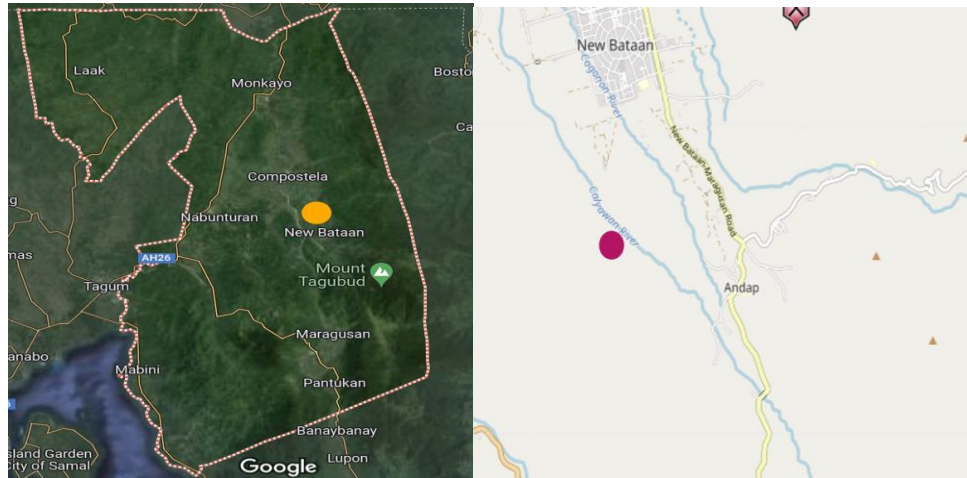
Research Site:

A preliminary study of the vegetation along the riverbanks of Calyawan River was conducted at Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro (Fig. 1). The sampling area can be reached by using the Compostela-Montevista-Mati Boundary Road. The assessment was conducted on December 20, 2022.

The sampling location is situated in the municipality of New Bataan, which is geographically surrounded by mountain ranges. Additionally, over half of its land area is occupied by forests, which have served as a source of livelihood for certain individuals. The barangays in New Bataan with the highest forest cover are Andap, Tandawan, Camanlangan,

and Manurigao. Several rivers also supply water to the area. One such example is the Calyawan River, which originates from the mountain in Barangay Andap.

Figure 1. Map Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro.



Sampling Method:

A transect measuring one kilometer in length was traversed along the riverbanks of the Calyawan River in Barangay Andap, located in the Municipality of New Bataan, inside the Province of Davao de Oro. The transect walk method offers rapid and quantitative assessments of richness and diversity for comparative surveys. This approach has been documented in studies by Spitzer et al. (1997), as well as in unpublished trips to Panama conducted by Thomas and Cheverton in 1978, and to Ghana by Spalding and others in 1989. Photographs were taken of riparian plants whenever they were encountered during the tour. The plant samples were not collected.

Species Classification:

The process of identifying and categorizing the species was incorporated into the species composition. Genus-level taxonomic identification was conducted based on the existing published literature, which includes species accounts. The following sources were consulted: Madulid (1995), Fernando et al. (2004), Co et al. (2006), Pancho and Gruezo (2008), Flora Malesiana Series (1995-2007), and Co's Digital Flora of the Philippines [11]. Online platforms such as iNaturalist and Google Lens were also utilized for taxonomic identification. All plants were recognized and categorized ecologically as either endemic, native/indigenous, or introduced/exotic.

The present conservation status and population information for each species were derived from the online reference of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (redlist.org) and the DENR Administrative Order of 2017, which provides an updated national list of threatened Philippine plants and their respective categories (DAO 2017-1).

Limitation of the Study:

This study specifically examined two categories of plants: ferns and angiosperms. The identification of riparian plants is limited to the genus level.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Number of Families and Genera of Ferns and Angiosperm in the Area

A rapid survey was conducted to determine the classification of riparian plants at the sampling location. The Angiosperm and Fern groups of plants are members of the plant family recorded. A total of 30 families and 49 genera were identified and recorded [Table 1].

The data is supported by many literatures stating that the angiosperms are the most varied group of terrestrial plants. With an estimated 225, 000 to 425, 000 species that are divided into over 400 families, these families are distinguished by a set of new characteristics that include the flower, fruits, and seed endosperm [11]. On the other hand, ferns are particularly prevalent in tropical regions and share a strong relationship with angiosperms due to the fact that both types of plants are vascular. The remarkable endurance of ferns to a wide variety of environmental conditions is likely responsible for the profusion of ferns that can be found in riparian zones [12].

Table 1. Total Number of Families and Genera of Ferns and Angiosperm at Calyawan River, Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Davao de Oro Province, Philippines

| Plant Groups | Family | Genera |
|--------------|--------|--------|
| Angiosperm | 21 | 36 |
| Ferns | 9 | 13 |

Classification of Plant Species in Riparian Vegetation.

As shown in Table 2, Angiosperm groupings are best represented by the Fabaceae family, which has five genera, while fern families are best represented by Polypodiaceae, which has three genera. The dominant family in the current dataset with three genera, Family Polypodiaceae, is consistent with previous studies on fern flora in different mountain ranges in Mindanao [13, 14]. The Polypodiaceae family is commonly encountered in surveys because its members possess the ability to thrive in both temperate and wet tropical regions, including the northern hemisphere [15]. The presence of this family is directly related to its function as the essential component in the process of lowering the number of materials transmitted from the terrestrial environment to the aquatic environment [16].

Within the Angiosperm category of plants, the Family Fabaceae had the maximum number of genus representatives in the area. This family is ranked third in terms of the number of species among Angiosperms worldwide [17]. The prevalence of the Family Fabaceae is directly correlated with its ecological and economic significance. They contribute to the enhancement of soil nitrogen levels and serve as a substantial protein source for both people and livestock. Some species are utilized as a source of food or medicine [18].

Table 2. Biological Classification of riparian flora accounted at Calyawan River, Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro, Philippines

| Plant Category | Family | Genus |
|----------------|-----------------------|--|
| Angiosperm | <i>Amaranthaceae</i> | - <i>Amaranthus</i> - <i>Celosia</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Araceae</i> | - <i>Alocasia</i> - <i>Epipremnum</i> - <i>Syngonium</i> - <i>Xanthosoma</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Asteraceae</i> | - <i>Acmella</i> - <i>Chromolaena</i> - <i>Mikania</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Costaceae</i> | - <i>Hellenia</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Euphorbiaceae</i> | - <i>Euphorbia</i> - <i>Macaranga</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Fabaceae</i> | - <i>Desmodium</i> - <i>Gliricidia</i> - <i>Mimosa</i> - <i>Neusthantus</i> - <i>Senna</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Lamiaceae</i> | - <i>Hyptis</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Lindsaeaceae</i> | - <i>Odontosoria</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Lygodiaceae</i> | - <i>Lygodium</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Malvaceae</i> | - <i>Pachira</i> - <i>Theobroma</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Meliaceae</i> | - <i>Swietenia</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Menispermaceae</i> | - <i>Pericampylus</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Moraceae</i> | - <i>Artocarpus</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Oxalidaceae</i> | - <i>Oxalis</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Piperaceae</i> | - <i>Piper</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Poaceae</i> | - <i>Bambusa</i> - <i>Cymbopogon</i> - <i>Melinis</i> - <i>Imperata</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Portulacaceae</i> | - <i>Portulaca</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Rutaceae</i> | - <i>Citrus</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Sapotaceae</i> | - <i>Synsepalum</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Solanaceae</i> | - <i>Solanum</i> |
| Angiosperm | <i>Verbenaceae</i> | - <i>Lantana</i> |
| Fern | <i>Aspleniaceae</i> | - <i>Asplenium</i> |
| Fern | <i>Athyriaceae</i> | - <i>Diplazium</i> |
| Fern | <i>Blechnaceae</i> | - <i>Blechnum</i> - <i>Stenochalena</i> |
| Fern | <i>Cyatheaceae</i> | - <i>Sphaeropterisglauca</i> |
| Fern | <i>Marratiaceae</i> | - <i>Angiopteris</i> |
| Fern | <i>Osmundaceae</i> | - <i>Osmunda</i> |
| Fern | <i>Polypodiaceae</i> | - <i>Aglaomorpha</i> - <i>Lepisorus</i> - <i>Microsorium</i> |
| Fern | <i>Pteridiceae</i> | - <i>Adiantum</i> - <i>Pteris</i> |

| | | |
|------|------------------|------------------|
| Fern | Thelypteridaceae | - <i>Chingia</i> |
|------|------------------|------------------|

Conservation and Ecological status of Riparian vegetation

The assessment of plant diversity in riparian regions indicates a worrisome condition across different genera, underscoring the necessity for conservation endeavors as depicted in Table 3. In terms of the biological condition of riparian plants, 74% of the plants found in the region are native to that specific area, while the remaining 26% are not native. Moreover, the study showed the effective conservation of riparian plants in the studied area.

Moreover, the data reveals a substantial quantity of endangered and fragile plant taxa belonging to ferns and Angiosperms, highlighting the ecological significance of these ecosystems. Two genera from the Angiosperms and three genera from the Ferns are categorized as endangered, indicating the precarious condition of certain species that are at risk of becoming extinct unless action is taken [19]. Out of the total of eighteen genera classified as vulnerable, twelve belong to angiosperms and the remaining seven belong to fern plants. The vulnerable category signifies that they are in a precarious position and are susceptible to becoming threatened [20]. All sixteen genera classified as least concern belong to the category of Angiosperm plants, indicating a largely steady population status [19]. There are a total of eleven genera that are classified under other threatened categories, with nine of them belonging to angiosperms and the remaining two belonging to fern plants.

Although the data reveals a negative representation of plant diversity in riparian areas, it also underscores the capacity of conservation methods to alleviate these risks and reinstate ecological equilibrium. Humans do significant damage to riparian plant communities, which are highly dynamic and complex systems that support a wide range of species. Furthermore, alterations in land use have had an impact on the diversity of species in riparian vegetation [21]. This highlights the wide range of dangers that riparian vegetation encounters.

Table 3. Endemism, ecological and conservation status of riparian flora accounted in Calyawan River, Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro.

| Family/Genus | Plant Group | Ecological Status | Conservation Status |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| Amaranthaceae - <i>Amaranthus</i> - <i>Celosia</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm | Non-Endemic Non-Endemic | LC LC |
| Araceae - <i>Alocasia</i> - <i>Epipremnum</i> - <i>Syngonium</i> - <i>Xanthosoma</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Endemic Endemic Endemic | Vu Vu Vu Vu |
| Aspleniaceae - <i>Asplenium</i> | Fern | Non-Endemic | Vu |
| Asteraceae - <i>Acmella</i> - <i>Chromolaena</i> - <i>Mikania</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Non-Endemic Non-Endemic | LC LC LC NT |
| Athyriaceae - <i>Diplazium</i> | Fern | Non-Endemic | NA |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Blechnaceae - <i>Blechnum</i> - <i>Stenochalena</i> | Fern Fern | Endemic Non-Endemic | Vu NA |
| Costaceae - <i>Hellenia</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | Vu |
| Cyatheaceae - <i>Sphaeropterisglauca</i> | Fern | Non-Endemic | EN |
| Euphorbiaceae - <i>Euphorbia</i> - <i>Macaranga</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Endemic | Vu OTS |
| Fabaceae - <i>Desmodium</i> - <i>Gliricidia</i> - <i>Mimosa</i> - <i>Neusthantus</i> - <i>Senna</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Endemic Endemic Endemic Endemic | OTS OTS OTS OTS OTS |
| Lamiaceae - <i>Hyptis</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | Vu |
| Lindsaeaceae - <i>Odontosoria</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | Vu |
| Lygodiaceae - <i>Lygodium</i> | Angiosperm | Non-Endemic | LC |
| Malvaceae - <i>Pachira</i> - <i>Theobroma</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Endemic | EN LC |
| Marratiaceae - <i>Angiopteris</i> | Fern | Non-Endemic | OTS |
| Meliaceae - <i>Swietenia</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | Vu |
| Menispermaceae - <i>Pericampylus</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | Vu |
| Moraceae - <i>Artocarpus</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | OTS |
| Osmundaceae - <i>Osmunda</i> | Fern | Endemic | OTS |
| Oxalidaceae - <i>Oxalis</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | OTS |
| Piperaceae - <i>Piper</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | OTS |
| Poaceae - <i>Bambusa</i> - <i>Cymbopogon</i> - <i>Melinis</i> - <i>Imperata</i> | Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm Angiosperm | Endemic Endemic Endemic Endemic | LC LC LC LC |
| Polypodiaceae - <i>Aglaomorpha</i> - <i>Lepisorus</i> - <i>Microsorium</i> | Fern Fern Fern | Non-Endemic Endemic Endemic | Vu EN Vu |
| Portulacaceae - <i>Portulaca</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | LC |
| Pteridiceae - <i>Adiantum</i> | Fern | Endemic | Vu |

| | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|----|
| - <i>Pteris</i> | Fern | Endemic | Vu |
| Rutaceae | | | |
| - <i>Citrus</i> | Angiosperm | Non-Endemic | LC |
| Sapotaceae | | | |
| - <i>Synsepalum</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | EN |
| Selaginellaceae | | | |
| - <i>Selaginella</i> | Lycophytes | Endemic | EN |
| Solanaceae | | | |
| - <i>Solanum</i> | Angiosperm | Endemic | LC |
| Thelypteridaceae | | | |
| - <i>Chingia</i> | Fern | Endemic | Vu |
| Verbenaceae | | | |
| - <i>Lantana</i> | Angiosperm | Non-Endemic | LC |

***Status:EN**= Endangered; **OTS**= Other Threatened Species; **VU**= Vulnerable; **LC**- Least Concern; **NA**-No assessment; Conservation status follows that of International Union for the Conservation of Nature(redlist.org, 2017) and DENR Administrative Order. 2017. Updated national list of threatened Philippine plants and their categories. DAO 2017-11.

4. CONCLUSION

A total of 49 genera of ferns and angiosperm plants belonging to 30 families were identified in the sampling site along the riverbanks of the Calyawan River in Barangay Andap, Municipality of New Bataan, Province of Davao de Oro, despite the little time available for sampling. 74% of the riparian plant genera are endemic, making up the majority of the reported plants. Evaluation of the status was required as the foundation for the protection, conservation, and monitoring of the species. 37 percent of the riparian plants that have been identified in the area are vulnerable, 30 percent are of least concern, 22 percent are other threatened species, 10 percent are endangered, and 1 percent have not been classified.

Therefore, it is advised that sampling efforts at the site be increased to expand the limited area covered, especially given that the region has evident anthropogenic activities, which have put a lot of strain on the fragments of forest and its flora.

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