Species diversity and distribution of mangrove vegetation in Moalboal, Cebu Island, Philippines

Anna Lou C. Cabuenas¹, Almira May F. Aunzo², and Benveinido M. Reducto³

Date Received: 28th of April, 2017 Date Accepted: 20th of November, 2017

ABSTRACT

This study identifies the diversity and distribution of mangrove species in Moalboal, Cebu, Philippines. Diversity and distribution assessment were conducted through non-experimental descriptive research design. The findings of the study revealed that mangrove vegetation in Moalboal is deteriorating and has continued to degrade over time. Species diversity was also found to be very low, with the Shannon-Weiner Index (H') registering coefficients ranging from 0.8854 to 1.2268 for the various areas in Moalboal. There were only four species belonging to three families of mangroves identified, of which Sonneratia alba was determined to be the most dominant. With these results, rehabilitation and protection of mangrove vegetation is recommended to the local management and to ensure the strict implementation, protection and conservation of mangrove management in the studied areas. There is a need to reforest the areas with emphasis on repopulating disappearing species to avoid further degradation. It is further recommended to conduct more research on the implementation of the conservation activities and its effect on the abundance of the mangroves in the area. The study of ecological adaptation of mangroves, relative density, frequency and relative dominance must be undertaken to serve as important bases in community-based management programs.

Keywords: mangroves distribution, mangroves diversity, mangroves in Cebu, mangroves vegetation

I. INTRODUCTION

In the year 1920, the Philippine coastline used to be covered by 400,000-500,000 ha of mangroves. However, due to overexploitation by coastal dwellers and other direct anthropogenic activities, mangrove vegetation areas declined to around 120,000 ha in 1994 (Primavera, 2000). This alarmed various government agencies and other stakeholders of the country. Different mitigation programs were imposed resulting to the increase of mangrove vegetation up to 247,362 ha (Forest Management Bureau, 2007). This earned the Philippines a place on the list of the most mangrove-rich countries in the world (Long & Giri, 2011) with the country hosting around 50% of the world’s approximately 65 species. However, that number has fallen short by almost half of its original area. Possible reasons for this loss may be attributed to localized threats such as climate change, natural calamities, and/or the conversion of these mangrove areas into commercial lots.

Moalboal is a 4th municipal income class municipality in the province of Cebu, Philippines extending as a peninsula on the southwestern tip of Cebu. It is bordered to the west by the Tañon Strait. Negros Island can be seen from the western shoreline. This municipality is between the towns of Alcantara and Badian, located 89 kilometres (55 mi) from Cebu City, about 2.5 hours by bus. It was estimated in the year 2002 that Moalboal used to be covered by 318 ha of mangrove vegetation with 18 mangrove species found.

1. ORCID Number: 0000-0003-1146-7485, A. L. C. Cabuenas is the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Visayas, Colon Street, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: annaloucabuenas@yahoo.com).
2. ORCID Number: 0000-0002-9383-3794, A. M. F. Aunzo is with the College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Visayas, Colon Street, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: almirabeforeenglish@gmail.com).
3. ORCID Number: 0000-0002-9161-8419, B. M. Reducto is with the College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Visayas, Colon Street, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: reducto_81@yahoo.com).
in the said area (Alburo, Tormis, & Rica, 2002). This 
figure suggests that Moalboal contributes around 
0.12% of coastal area of the total mangrove vegetation 
in the country. Despite imposing legal sanctions that 
penalize reclamation of mangrove plantations and the 
prohibition of the cutting of mangrove trees (as 
outlined in Section 71 of Republic Act 7161), it was 
reported by Campo (2014) that a 5,000 sq. meter lot 
with fully grown mangrove vegetation was nevertheless 
reclaimed and developed into a commercial 
establishment. Because of Moalboal’s geographic 
location and white beaches, it is one of the most-visited 
municipalities by tourists. Although this is a boost for 
the tourism industry, it is not without adverse effects 
from an ecological and environmental standpoint. 
Mangroves have become interspersed with nipa huts 
and tourist beach resorts in the leeward side of the 
island, and have been degraded over time (Dahdouh-
Guevas & Koedam, 2008).

An update on species diversity and conservation management of mangroves must be conducted, 
considering that worsening climate change exacerbates damage from calamities and affects coastal regions. It is 
therefore increasingly important to know the current situation of mangrove vegetation, its diversity, and 
efforts being put to address whatever threats are experienced at hand in Moalboal. This study aims to 
revisit the status of the mangrove vegetation in terms of its species diversity to provide a plausible basis for 

to address the threats in mangrove vegetation.

This study aimed to determine the status of the 
taxonomic diversity and abundance of mangrove species in Poblacion, Moalboal, Cebu, Philippines. It also 
intended to know the diversity of existing mangrove species in the area. Furthermore, it sought to gather 
information on the different challenges and programs adopted to address the threats in mangrove vegetation.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive research design to 
assess the structure of three areas in Moalboal. Area I is 
comprised of Brgy. Balbagon, Area II covers Brgy. 
Poblacion East and Brgy. Tomonoy, while Area III is 
comprised of Brgy. Saavedra. A 10m x 10m transect plot 
was established in the three areas. The mangroves 
inside the plots were identified in situ, classified 
taxonomically and determined using the field guide 

This study used the Shannon-Weiner Index (H') in 
calculating the proportion of every mangrove specie 
found in each identified area.

The equation is: 

\[ H' = \sum (pi \ln pi) \]

Where: pi=proportion of individuals found in the i 
species  
ln= natural Logarithm

Table 1 shows the interpretation of species diversity based on a range of H' values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative Values</th>
<th>H' values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>≥ 3.5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.0000-3.4999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.5000-2.9999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.0000-2.4999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>≤ 1.9999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Here the researchers present the data gathered and 
the results of the statistical analyses.

The sample area of the study is composed of 128 
mangrove trees. These mangrove trees are classified 
into three (3) families namely: Sonneratiaceae, 
Avicenniaceae, and Rhizophoraceae. There are three (3) 
genera under this family: Sonneratia, Avicennia, and 
Rhizophora wherein there are four (4) species as 
shown in the table.

The figures show the relative densities of all 
mangrove species in the three areas. Area I shows that 
S. alba is the most dense species with 51% in the 10x10 
m transect plot. On the other hand, R. apiculata is 
revealed as the next densest species, followed by A. 
rumphiana. The relative densities of Area I1 show that 
R. apiculata has the largest density of all the species in 
the area that covers more than half of the mangrove 
area. It covers around 57% of area II. S. alba and A. 
marina have the least number of individual species in 
the area. In area III R. apiculata covers almost all the 
etire area in which its density covers up to 71%. S. 
marina mangrove species covered around 13% of 
relative densities which is second to the largest density 
of mangrove species. A. rumphiana have the least 
number of species in the area. S. alba is very sparse in 
this area comprising only 7% of the total distribution.
Table 3 shows the diversity of mangrove species ($H'$) in each area. Area I has four species (4) namely *S. alba*, *A. marina*, *A. rumphiana*, and *R. apiculata*. Total species diversity computed in Area I is 1.018 which is interpreted as very low. In Area II, there are also four (4) counted species. These include *S. alba*, *A. marina*, *A. rumphiana*, and *R. apiculata*. Overall computed diversity index is 0.8854 which has a very low relative value. This area shows the very least species diversity among the areas. Area III also has four (4) species found namely *S. alba*, *A. marina*, *A. rumphiana*, and *R. apiculata*. Overall computed species diversity is 1.2268. The diversity value of the area is also very low. The result of the data gathered entails that the diversity of mangroves in all the three (3) areas of Moalboal are consistently very low.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Mangroves have offered significant benefits in Cebu’s Moalboal area. However, they are facing a tremendous threat evident in their dwindling numbers in terms of diversity and distribution in the identified areas of the said place. *S. alba* has the highest frequency, covering around 39% of the mangroves present in all the areas. *R. apiculata* has a frequency of 30% followed by *R. rumphiana* and *A. marina* which...
have the least abundance. Total species diversity in all areas is very low and must be treated as an alarming statistic. This may be utilized as the basis for considerations in future planning to increase the diversity and abundance of the mangrove species in Moalboal. From these findings, it is hereby endorsed that rehabilitation and protection of the mangrove vegetation must be considered in the strategic plans of local management and to ensure the strict implementation, protection and conservation of mangrove management in the studied areas. It is further recommended that more research must be conducted on the implementation of the conservation activities and their effect on the abundance of the mangroves in the area including the study of ecological adaptation of mangroves, relative density, frequency and relative dominance. These studies create a scientific basis for the formulation of community-based ecological management programs. Also, further studies may be conducted to compare the forest structure and diversity of mangroves in their natural or undisturbed habitat.

REFERENCES
Authors

Dr. Anna Lou C. Cabuenas is currently the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in the University of the Visayas Main Campus, where she also served as chairperson of the Department of Natural Science and Mathematics. She has an undergraduate degree in Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of the Visayas, as well as an NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care and NVQ Level 4 in Leadership and Management earned from Majestic College in the United Kingdom. She also holds a master’s degree in Teaching Science and is a doctor of education, majoring in Educational Leadership and Management. She has published and presented research studies on biology both in local and international conferences.

Almira May Aunzo has been teaching natural science subjects at the University of the Visayas – Main Campus since 2014. She graduated at Cebu Normal University with a degree in Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in General Science and she is working on her thesis to complete her master’s degree in Science Education at the same university.

Benvenido M. Reducto is a faculty of College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Visayas. He took up Bachelor of Science in Nursing at University of the Visayas and Diploma for Professional Education at Consolacion Community College.