

Diversity and distribution of sponge fauna in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka possesses an immense marine biodiversity as it is surrounded by the Indian ocean. Sponges (Phylum Porifera) are an important component of coral reef ecosystems and are becoming more prominent in the pharmacological and biomedical industries in the world. However, limited number of studies have been carried out on Sri Lankan marine sponges. Review of previous studies on marine sponges in Sri Lanka carried out by Bowerbank, (1873); Burton, (1930); Carter, (1880); Dendy, (1905), Thomas, (1971) added to results on ongoing research on integrative taxonomy of Sri Lankan shallow water demosponges. In order to get previous information on diversity of marine sponges in Sri Lanka, above mentioned studies were reviewed, and all the species were checked against the World Porifera Database. More than 100 sponge samples were collected around Sri Lanka in the summer (June-August) of 2018 and morphological characteristics were used to identify samples. The review confirmed that 244 species have been recorded during the historical studies: two species in class Homoscleromorpha, 10 species in class Calcarea, 232 species in class Demospongiae. Furthermore, no species were recorded in class Hexactinellida. Newly collected samples include one species of Homoscleromorpha and 56 species of Demospongiae.

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