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Biochemical environment and sustenance of *Schizothorax* spp. in river Jhelum of Kashmir Himalayas in India

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The river Jhelum (an important tributary of Indus River) is main drainage system of Kashmir valley originating from Pir Panjal range of Himalayan mountains connected by all other lentic and lotic habitats in the valley. The river system revealed an appreciable variation in the physicochemical environment and depicted typical lotic phenomenon with temperature <10°C, alkaline (pH, 7.9-8.3), hard (hardness, 72-240 mg/L) and with significant variation in nitrogen and phosphorus concentration. A total of 27 taxa of macrozoobenthos recorded in the Jhelum system among which arthropod was dominant (18 taxa) followed by Annelida (6 taxa) and mollusca (3 taxa). The species diversity (H^{-H}-Index) was recorded highest as 3.2 in main river and species richness was recorded highest in the tributaries feeding the Jhelum. In response to changing limnological characteristics of river Jhelum system, the fish fauna of the valley is quite different from rest of India and is dominated by the Schizothoracinae (snow trout) group. A total of 19 species of fishes belonging to cypriniformes, siluriformes, cyprinodontiformes and salmoniformes among which dominant species of fishes are *Schizothorax plagiostomus*, *S. labiatus*, *S. esocinus* and *Glyptosternon reticulatum*. The ichthyofauna of the tributaries of the Jhelum is rather limited and different in nature, particularly in the fast flowing zones of the streams. The mean range of fishing effort in the river system was 170 g-350 g per man-hour, which is less than 50% of that reported earlier. Since fishing effort is an index of the fish population structure in a water body, it clearly indicates that the fish population in the river has declined, probably as a consequence of the ecological stress.

Biography

Mir Dilgeer Mahdi completed his PhD in 2011 at University of Kashmir, J&K, India. He was appointed as an Assistant Professor in Department of Higher Education in J&K, India. He has more than 15 years of Research experience and is teaching Zoology for last 10 years. He has published more than 15 papers in reputed journals and has attended number of national and international research conferences in India.

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