Estimating ecosystem health of shallow water pond in lower Irongmara, Barak Valley, Assam, India using ASPT, SPI and BWMP Score

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Abstract

Current study was carried out in a community pond located in lower Irongmara, Barak Valley, Assam. Water of the pond is regularly utilized for domestic purpose, fish culture and rarely for drinking purpose. Present study reported aquatic insect order Hemiptera as the only order throughout the year. Among Hemipterans, family Notonectidae showed highest relative abundance (97%) followed by family Gerridae (3%). Neogerris parvula Stål, Antsops barbata Brooks and Enotheres fusca Brooks are the aquatic insect species recorded from the pond. Except concentration of Phosphate, all other physico-chemical parameters were found within permissible limit. Shannon Diversity index values, ASPT, SPI , BWMP score of pond suggest, despite good ecological potential human induced activities are responsible for degradation of habitat quality. Biological monitoring of any water body using different biotic scores along with physico-chemical analysis of water quality can display total health status of a particular water body.

Keywords: Pond, Physico-chemical parameters, aquatic insects, Hemiptera, diversity, abundance.

Introduction

Water is a vital natural resource that provides habitat to large number of organisms. Its uses may include drinking and other domestic uses, industrial cooling, power generation, agriculture, transportation and waste disposal. Ponds, streams, rivers, marsh etc. form the major sources of fresh water on the earth surface. Though ponds are smaller in size still they cater to the day to day needs of the people particularly of the rural areas. A pond is referred to as a man-made or natural water body which is between 1 m² and 2 ha (~5 acres or 20,000 m²) in area, which holds water for four months of the year or more. Good water quality is necessary for providing us with drinking water that is safe and clean; for providing habitat for aquatic bugs, plants, and animals; for providing recreational opportunities like wading, swimming, and fishing; and for providing a place for us to connect with nature. Primarily the physical and chemical environment shapes community structure of an ecosystem. Characteristics of water bodies influence the quality of water individually and also in combination with various pollutants. Urbanization and industrial activities have done much harm to the natural and aquatic environment. Source of surface water and ground water have become increasingly contaminated due to increased industrial and agricultural activity. Pollution and loss of wetland has disastrous effects on wildlife and biodiversity.

Aquatic insects are known as the indicator organisms, used for biomonitoring of environmental health. They serve as food for fishes and other invertebrates and at the same time they act as vectors through which disease pathogens are transmitted to both humans and animals. They provide information to environmental managers and decisions makers to take accurate and justifiable actions in regards to the state and quality of water bodies. Now a days, different biotic score systems are widely applied to assess water quality of ponds, lakes, streams as well as rivers. The Biological Monitoring Working Party (BMWP) Score is an index for measuring the biological quality of rivers using species of macro invertebrates as biological indicators. This index has largely superseded previous indices such as the Trent Biotic Index and Chandler Biotic Score, and is widely used by organizations such as the Environment Agency. Similarly, Average Score Per Taxon (ASPT) is also utilized for estimation of water quality. In the present study, an attempt has been made to analyze ecological status of a particular pond, which is prone to continuous human induced disturbances in the form of bathing, cleaning, fishing including unscientific management practices etc.

Material and Methods

Current study was carried out in a community pond (69.597 N, 92.72972 E) located in lower Irongmara, Barak Valley, Assam; figure-1. Water of the pond is regularly utilized for domestic purpose, fish culture and rarely for drinking purpose. Water and aquatic insect samples were collected in three replicates from the pond during post monsoon (September-November 2009), winter (December–February 2010), pre monsoon (March-May 2010) and monsoon (June-August 2010). Physico-chemical parameters such as Air temperature (AT), Water temperature (WT), pH, Electrical Conductivity (EC), Dissolved oxygen (DO), Free CO₂, Total alkalinity (TA), Nitrate (NO₃), Phosphate (PO₄) and ammonium (NH₄) content of water samples were analyzed by standard methods. The aquatic insects were collected by kick method whereby the vegetation was disturbed and the circular net (mesh size 60µm) was dragged around the...
vegetation for one minute\textsuperscript{16,17}. Collected insects were immediately sorted and preserved in 70% ethyl alcohol. They were later identified using Dewinter advance stereozoom Microscope with the help of standard keys\textsuperscript{18-24}. A number of identified insects were confirmed in the entomological laboratory of Zoological Survey of India. Average Score Per Taxon (ASPT) and biological monitoring working party (BMWP) scores were determined by standard methods (Pond Action website). Statistical analyses were made by SPSS 10 and Biodiversity professional version 2 for Windows.

**Results and Discussion**

Physico-chemical properties of the water of the pond studied (N=12) are shown in table 1. Except concentration of phosphate, all other parameters were found within permissible limit\textsuperscript{25-29}. Significant correlations among physico-chemical parameters, diversity and density of aquatic insects are shown in table 2. Aquatic insect order Hemiptera was the only order recorded throughout the study period. Among Hemipterans, family Notonectidae showed highest relative abundance (97%) followed by family Gerridae (3%) as presented in figure-2. Notonectidae being one of the most tolerant families indicate the polluted and adverse nature of aquatic habitat\textsuperscript{30}. \textit{Neogerris parvula} Stål, \textit{Anisops barbata} Brooks and \textit{Enitheres fusca} Brooks are the aquatic insect species recorded from the pond. \textit{Enitheres fusca} showed maximum relative abundance (54%) followed by \textit{Anisops barbata} (43%) and \textit{Neogerris parvula} (3%); figure-3. In fact, \textit{Anisops barbata} Brooks, \textit{Enitheres fusca} Brooks were recorded from the pond in each of the season during entire year of study however \textit{Neogerris parvula} was recorded during Post Monsoon only as shown in table 4. Shannon diversity index, Evenness index and Berger-Parker dominance index calculated for the pond are shown in table-5. The evenness index value (0.97) and Berger Parker dominance value (0.58) suggested more or less even distribution of aquatic insects in the pond studied. Shannon diversity index value (0.33) indicated the polluted nature of the pond along with degradation of habitat structure\textsuperscript{31}. Domestic releases into the water body is the main reason behind polluted nature of the waterbody. As the pond is prone to continuous human induced disturbances, it lacks any kind of aquatic vegetation or macrophytes. Overfishing, use of fine mesh nets and removal of macrophytes are the other major reasons behind habitat degradation of this pond. Due to lack of proper scientific awareness, villagers consider macrophytes as unwanted weeds and promote their removal. Hydrophytes provide anchorage, natural hiding places, protection from rapid disturbances of water, provide more oxygen and afford suitable sprawling niche\textsuperscript{2,25}. Aquatic insects are also considered as harmful pest in the village and there are many instances of application of pesticides for removal of aquatic insects. BWMP score, ASPT score, SPI score, status of taxa richness as well as Signal score status for the pond are shown in table 3. The ASPT value obtained form the site indicates good ecological potential (GEP) as ASPT greater or equal to the score of 4.5 indicate good ecological potential of the water body\textsuperscript{32}. But BWMP score reflect poor quality of water\textsuperscript{33}. SPI score (SIGNAL) and Taxa richness status also reveal the water quality is affected by human activities such as agricultural pollution\textsuperscript{16}.

**Table -1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard dev.</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT (°C)</td>
<td>24.96</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>22.67-29.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WT (°C)</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>21.03-27.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF (mm)</td>
<td>227.17</td>
<td>179.19</td>
<td>0-426.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>6.00-7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC (ms/ppt)</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>3.97-9.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans (cm)</td>
<td>28.29</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>17.33-39.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO (mg/l)</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>7.09-9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCO\textsubscript{2}(mg/l)</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>5.65-8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (mg/l)</td>
<td>24.58</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>11.00-30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO\textsubscript{3}(mg/l)</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.16-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO\textsubscript{2}(mg/l)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>2.14-2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH\textsubscript{4}(mg/l)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH\textsubscript{3}(mg/l)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03-0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table -2**

Significant correlations among different environmental variables and diversity and density of aquatic insects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pH Vs Density</td>
<td>.960(*)</td>
<td>NH\textsubscript{4} Vs Diversity</td>
<td>.964(*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table -3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPT and BWMP scores for the pond studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASPT score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seasonal distribution of aquatic insects recorded from the pond

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Post Monsoon</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Pre Monsoon</th>
<th>Monsoon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Enithares fusca</em> Brooks</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anisops barbata</em> Brooks</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Neogerris parvula</em> Stål</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shannon diversity index, Evenness index and Berger-Parker index of dominance of aquatic insects in the pond studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shannon H’ Log Base 10.</th>
<th>Shannon J’</th>
<th>Berger-Parker Dominance (d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative abundance of aquatic insect families recorded from the pond

- Gerridae: 3%
- Notonectidae: 97%
- Notonectidae: 97%
- Neogerris parvula: 3%
- Anisops barbata: 43%
- Enithares fusca: 54%

Relative abundance of aquatic insect species recorded from the pond

Conclusion

This study clearly stated that though the pond has good ecological potential, human induced activities have detrimental effect on it. Villagers should be made aware of the scientific ways of pond management so that they can make wise use of water. Present study also revealed that biological monitoring of any water body using different biotic scores along with physico-chemical analysis of water quality can display total health status of a particular water body.

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