

Vegetation Changes along Altitudinal Gradients in Human Disturbed Forests of Uttara Kannada, Central Western Ghats

G.R. Rao^{1#}, G. Krishnakumar², Sumesh N. Dudani^{1§}, M.D. Subash Chandran^{1†} and T.V. Ramachandra^{1*}

¹*Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru 560 012, Karnataka, India* ²*Department of Applied Botany, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri 574 199, Karnataka, India.*

*E-mail: #<grrao1@gmail.com>, ²<energy@ces.iisc.ernet.in>, [§]<sumesh@ces.iisc.ernet.in>, [†]<mds@ces.iisc.ernet.in>, *<cestvr@ces.iisc.ernet.in>*

KEYWORDS Western Ghats. Uttara Kannada. Vegetation. Human Disturbances

ABSTRACT This study was carried out along the altitudinal gradients of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, representing different agro-climatic zones – coast, hilly and plains. 10 different sectors were selected for the study. Transect based survey resulted in documenting a total of 134 species of trees and 146 species of shrubs. It was found that the sectors 6, 7 and 8, lying in the Western Ghats section, were having semi-evergreen to evergreen forests and had the highest species diversity, percentage evergreen and percentage endemism. The sectors 9 and 10 in eastern plains harbour dry deciduous forests dominated by teak. The coastal sectors have more moist deciduous forests affected by human disturbances except for a patch of sacred grove in sector 1. However, the regeneration of evergreens, especially in the Ghat section areas, can be considered as a good sign for the return of evergreen forests and need to be austere protected.