



Analysis of Riparian Vegetation Diversity at Khanda Gad Stream, Garhwal Himalaya, Uttarakhand, India

Pratibha Baluni¹, Priya Kathait², Pankaj Bahuguna³, C. B. Kotnala⁴ and Rajesh Rayal^{2*}

¹*Department of Botany, Government Degree College Dehradun Sehar-248001, Uttarakhand, India.*

²*Department of Zoology, Shri Guru Ram Rai University, Dehradun-248001, Uttarakhand, India.*

³*Department of Zoology, Government Degree College Dehradun Sehar-248001, Uttarakhand, India.*

⁴*Department of Zoology, HNB Garhwal University Campus (A Central University),*

Pauri Garhwal-246001, Uttarakhand, India

**Corresponding author: drrajeshrayal@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The floral diversity found along water streams and rivers is known as riparian vegetation. It is a zone of transition between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Riparian vegetation helps to maintain nutrient balance and energy flow in ecosystems, as well as provides a variety of resources to aquatic mites and other macroinvertebrates. It also helps to control sediment load in water bodies, which affects water quality. The purpose of this study was to add new information about the status of riparian vegetation in the hill-stream Khanda Gad and to investigate its impact on the occurrence of aquatic mites. During the current study, 45 plant species from 31 different families were collected and identified. The Rosaceae were identified as the dominant family.

Keywords: Aquatic mites, Aquatic macroinvertebrates, Garhwal Himalaya, Khanda Gad, Riparian vegetation.

INTRODUCTION

The ecological complex known as riparian zones is where terrestrial and aquatic systems converge. The riparian zone can be seen as an extension of the river continuum, with “energy driver associations” that have an effect on the stream ecology (Cummins, 1993). These areas are extremely diverse and abundant in species due to their ecotone status. According to Pandey et al. (2022), the interrelationship between the area’s vegetation, soil, and water is what gives the riparian zone its ecological significance. The vegetation of the riparian zone includes terrestrial species that live in the understorey and canopy as well as emergent aquatic and semi-aquatic plants (Parson, 1991). The geomorphological, physicochemical, and biological characteristics of aquatic ecosystems are significantly influenced by riparian vegetation (Srivastava, 2007). In addition to their function as photosynthetic organisms, they also support a variety of aquatic, amphibian, and terrestrial species and exchange nutrients

and energy between two ecosystems (Gregory et al., 1991; Verry et al., 2000; Baluni and Chandola, 2019; Baluni et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2022). Surface overflow is prevented by riparian vegetation, which reduces the sediment load. A low sediment rate increases light penetration, which benefits algal growth, fish size, and predators (ZumBerge et al., 2003). Micro- and macro-invertebrates and fish living in the stream or river use the debris and litter of the vegetation stuck in the water channel as food and a breeding ground (Harmon et al., 1986). Numerous aquatic mites and macrozoobenthos require the substrate to complete their life cycles, which aquatic plants and riparian vegetation provide (Sharma et al., 2022).

Aquatic biologists are very aware of the value of riparian vegetation, and as a result, extensive research has been done in this area. Sagir and Dobriyal (2017, 2018) and Sagir et al. (2018) studied the riparian vegetation of Western Nayar, while Balodi et al. (2004) provided a detailed analysis of the riparian vegetation of Eastern

Nayar. The goal of the current investigation is to document the riparian vegetation along the hill-stream Khanda Gad in Pauri, Uttarakhand, India. It also attempts to examine how the riparian zone affects aquatic mites.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The hill stream Khanda Gad receives water from several springs, underground seeps, and surface runoff. It is a tributary of the spring-fed river Alaknanda and is located between Latitude 30°12'N and Longitude 79°43'E. (Map-1). The two parent streams, the Kathulshyun Gad and the Nandalshyun Gad join at Khanda Chatti, about 200 meters before the village of Khanda, to form the Khanda Gad. As a result, for the majority of its 23.5 Km length, the stream Khanda Gad is a third-order stream. One year of consistent monitoring was conducted to determine seasonal variations in the vegetation pattern.

After the confluence zone, riparian vegetation in Khanda Gad was collected from both banks of the river, identified with the assistance of the locals, and then confirmed using various keys to the floras of Uttarakhand and the Himalayas for their taxonomical specification (Gaur, 1999). Numerous subject matter experts have been consulted in order to validate and confirm the accuracy of the information gathered. In order to analyze the riparian vegetation precisely, the information collected is further divided into categories such as family, vernacular name, availability, and habit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 24 species of woody, climbers, shrubs, weeds, and herbs in addition to 21 tree species (Table 1). Out of the 45 species found, it was noted that a maximum of 21 (46.67%) were trees, followed by 24 (53.33%) woody species, climbers, shrubs, weeds, and herbs.

Rosaceae was noted as the dominant family with maximum 8 species followed by Cannabaceae, Dioscoreaceae, Poaceae, Polygonaceae, Solanaceae, smilacaceae and verbenaceae family each with 2 species. Single plant species were to represent the remaining 23 species.

Environmental gradients in multiple dimensions are a defining characteristic of lotic ecosystems (Ward, 1989). The interaction of soil, water, and vegetation elements in riparian ecosystems determines the ecological importance of these ecosystems (Pandey et al., 2022). Riparian vegetation provides organic matter in the form of tree branches, dead leaves, needles, twigs, logs, buds, fruit, and dissolved organic matter (Zanetti et al., 2016, Sharma et al., 2022). The aquatic biota requires this additional availability of organic materials greatly because

it depends on them for its main source of energy (Hynes 1963, Cummins 1974). According to Fisher and Likens (1973), riparian vegetation is heavily shaded by the forest canopy and provides 99 percent of the aquatic ecosystem's annual energy input.

Some researchers (Cummins, 1974; Hawkins and Sedell, 1981; Hefting et al., 2005) have examined the various ways opted by aquatic organisms to utilize and process the organic matter provided by riparian vegetation. According to Hynes (1975), there is a significant relationship between stream biota and riparian vegetation. The riparian vegetation along the Kyunja stream was found to be abundant and favorable for biological productivity, similar to previous studies in which we found abundant epilithic periphyton, standing stock of detritus, and macrozoobenthos, as reported by Baluni and Chandola (2019). The Western Nayar's riparian vegetation has been studied by Sagir and Dobriyal (2017, 2018), who came to the conclusion that it creates detritus, which benefits the growth of fish and macrozoobenthos.

Rich riparian vegetation along the stream demonstrated an improvement in the biological productivity of the stream (Baluni and Chandola, 2019; Sharma et al., 2022). Numerous authors noted detritus standing stock and abundant epilithic periphyton alongside macrozoobenthos. Khanda Gad stream has been reported to have 14 different species of water mites (Acari: Hydrachnidia) (Kumar and Dobriyal, 1992; Pesic et al., 2004; 2007a-b; 2010, 2019a,b; Kumar et al., 2007; Bahuguna and Negi, 2021). Periphyton diversity and distribution in relation to stream physicochemical parameters have a significant impact on the occurrence of several aquatic mites (Pesic et al., 2020a-b; 2022a,b; Baluni et al., 2017,2018,2020; Bahuguna et al., 2019a-b, 2020a-b; Baluni 2020; Negi et al., 2021a,b), drifting behaviour of micro and macrozoobenthos (Bahuguna et al., 2019b, 2020b; Bahuguna and Dobriyal, 2020,2022) and on the diversity of fishes (Rayal et al., 2021 a,b; Bahuguna 2020,2021; Bahuguna and Joshi, 2012; Bahuguna et al., 2010) as well as macrozoobenthos (Rautela, et al., 2006; Bahuguna and Dobriyal, 2018; Kumar and Dobriyal, 1999; Mamgain et al., 2021)

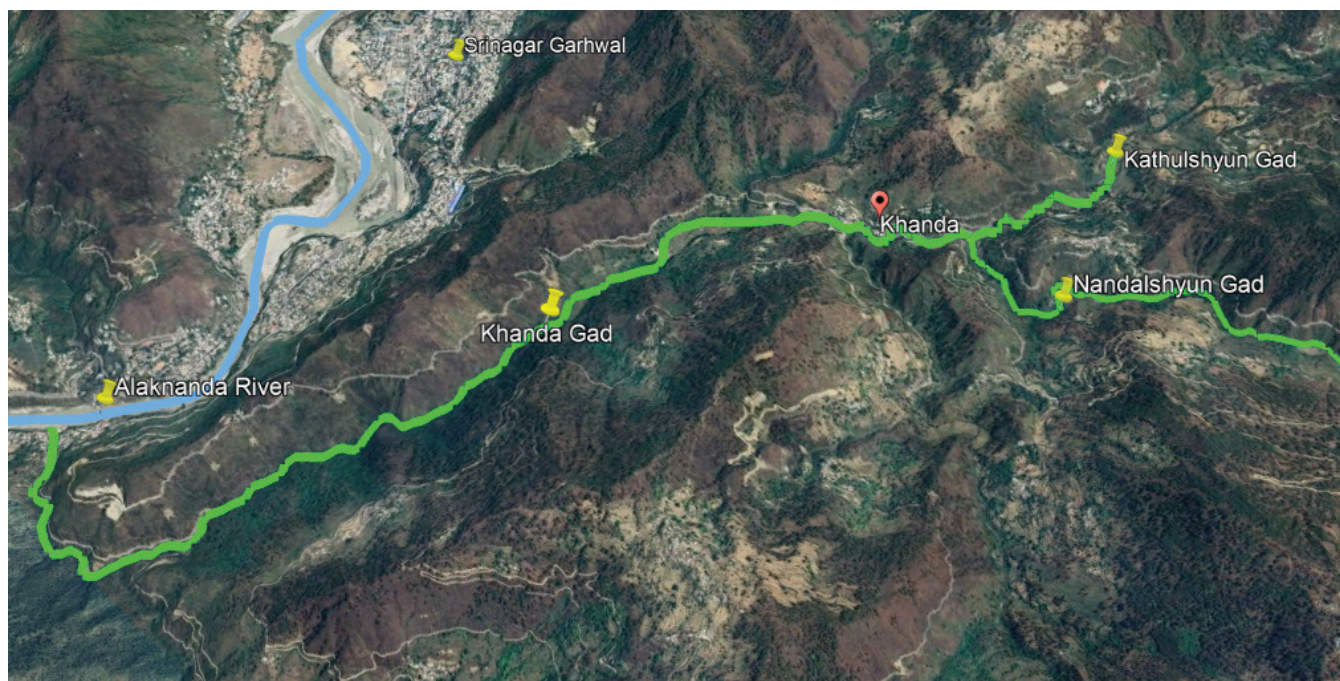
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Table 1: List of Riparian vegetation along the Khanda Gad 3rd order stream.

S. N	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	FAMILY
1.	Trees		
2.	<i>Mangifera indica</i> Linn.	Aam	Anacardiaceae
3.	<i>Alnus nepalensis</i> D.Don	Utis	Betulaceae
4.	<i>Celtis australis</i> Linn	Khirk	Cannabaceae
5.	<i>Cupressus torulosa</i> D.Don	Surai	Cupressaceae
6.	<i>Rhododendron arboreum</i> Smith	Burans	Ericaceae
7.	<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> Roxb.	Shisham	fabaceae
8.	<i>Aesculus indica</i> (Wall.ex Camb.)Hook.f.	Paangar	Hippocastanaceae
9.	<i>Juglans regia</i> Linn.	Akhroot/akhod	Juglandaceae
10.	<i>Cinnamomum tamala</i> Nees	Daalchini/tejpata	Lauraceae
11.	<i>Toona ciliata</i> M.Roem.	Tun	Meliaceae
12.	<i>Cocculus laurifolius</i> DC	Tilkar/tilfada	Menispermaceae
13.	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Linn.	Vat, Bargad	Moraceae
14.	<i>Myrica esculenta</i> (butch-Ham.ex.D.Don	Kafal	Myricaceae
15.	<i>Cedrus deodara</i> (Roxb. ex Lambert.).Don	Devdar	Pinaceae
16.	<i>Punica granatum</i> L.	Annar	Punicaceae
17.	<i>Prunus cerasoides</i> D.Don. xyn	Padam/ paiyan	Rosaceae
18.	<i>Prunus persica</i> (L) Batsch	Aadu	Rosaceae
19.	<i>Pyrus granatum</i> L.	Naspati	Rosaceae
20.	<i>Pyrus pashia</i> Buch-hem.ex. D.Don	Mehal	Rosaceae
21.	<i>Citrus medica</i> Linn	Galgal	Rutaceae
22.	<i>Grewia optiva</i> J.R Drumn. ex Burrett	Bhimal	Tiliaceae
23.	WOODY / CLIMBERS/ SHRUBS/ HERBS		
24.	<i>Carissa opaca</i> Stapf ex Haines	Karonda	Apocynaceae
25.	<i>Berberis asiatica</i> Roxb. ex DC	Kilmoda	Berberidaceae
26.	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> Linn.	Bhang	Cannabaceae
27.	<i>Trichosanthes palmata</i> Roxb.	Ilaadu/indrayan	Cucurbitaceae
28.	<i>Dioscorea belophylla</i> (Prain) Haines	Taidu/tarud	Dioscoreaceae
29.	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i> Linn.	Gethi/ratalu	Dioscoreaceae
30.	<i>Reinwardtia indica</i>	Fauli	Linaceae
31.	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Doob ghass	Poaceae
32.	<i>Arundo donax</i>	Baru, Nal	Poaceae
33.	<i>Polygonum nepalensis</i>		Polygonaceae
34.	<i>Rumex hastatus</i>	Almora	Polygonaceae
35.	<i>Zizipus sp.</i>		Rhamnaceae
36.	<i>Pyracantha crenulata</i> (D.Don)	Ghigharu	Rosaceae
37.	<i>Rosa brunonii</i>	Kunj	Rosaceae
38.	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Jungali gulab	Rosaceae
39.	<i>Rubus ellipticus</i>	Hisool	Rosaceae
40.	<i>Smilax aspera</i>	Kukur darh	Smilacaceae
41.	<i>Smilax sp.</i>		Smilacaceae
42.	<i>Datura stramonium</i> Linn.	Dhatura	Solanaceae
43.	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>		Solanaceae

44.	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Kandali	Urticaceae
45.	<i>Vateriana hardwickii</i> Wall.	Samoya/tager	Valerianaceae
46.	<i>Lantana indica</i>	Panjphulli	Verbenaceae
47.	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Raimuniya	Verbenaceae



Map-1: The study area; Khanda Gad (Source: Google Map)

Declaration: We also declare that all ethical guidelines have been followed during this work and there is no conflict of interest among authors.

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