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## Ongoing Study Reveals High Aquatic Fungal Diversity; An Untouched Component in Sri Lankan Biodiversity

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### ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka is an island nation with diverse ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, grasslands, and vast coasts. The country showcases a rich aquatic ecosystem that includes both coastal and inland waters. Freshwater habitats such as rivers, streams, marshes, and man-made reservoirs are the host for diverse fungal communities. However, documentation and identification of freshwater fungi in Sri Lanka have not yet been done as they face significant challenges, including unexplored taxa, misidentification, and hitherto reliance on morphological data, as well as limited funding, awareness, and expertise. This study aims to assess the limitations, potentials, and conservation efforts related to the identification of fungi in freshwater habitats in Sri Lanka. The assessment has revealed several potential opportunities for future research, including the exploration of novel fungal strains that are found in freshwater habitats, identification and classification of existing fungi, setting up and utilization of the freshwater fungal repository, access to reference databases, and identification of industrial applications.

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