ABSTRACT

The area under study is the main stretch of the River Jhelum from Mangla Dam to Jhelpura five Kilometers downstream of Rasool Barrage. The main purpose of the study was to study and have an understanding of the fish fauna of this area and its comparison with fish fauna of other rivers in the area. Fish collections were made during the years 2003 to 2005 from seven collection spots namely Sheikhupura Dhand, Jhelum Bridge, Saha Baga, Chingus Warena, Darapur Dhand, Rasool Headworks and Marala Dhand. In total 1191 fish specimens were collected during field visits by using the standard fish collection techniques.

The whole collection comprised of fifty one fish species belonging to nine orders, seventeen families and thirty eight genera were collected during these field collections. Out of these 4 species are strictly pelagic, 17 are demersal and rest of the 30 are benthic. The nine orders found are Osteoglossiformes, Chupiformes, Cypriniformes, Siluriformes, Mugiliformes, Beloniformes, Channiformes, Perciformes and Syngnathiformes. Out of these four orders were represented by only one species each. These orders are Osteoglossiformes, Chupiformes, Beloniformes and Syngnathiformes which are represented by Notopeterus notopeterus Pallas, Gudasia chapa (Hamilton), Xenotundus canca (Hamilton) and Mastacembelus armatus (Leecepede) respectively. Order Cypriniformes is represented by two families namely Cyprinidae and Loricariidae. Similarly order Siluriformes is represented by fishes belonging to five families namely Balistidae, Sisoridae, Sisoridae, Herpetotrematidae and Schilbeidae. The most abundant family is Cyprinidae which is represented by seventeen genera. The thirty species reported first time from the River Jhelam are Notopeterus notopeterus Pallas, Gudasia chapa (Hamilton), Cheila cachua (Hamilton), Salmocephala puntius (Bensley), Aspidoparia mor (Hamilton), Amblypogonidae moln (Hamilton), Barilus modestus (Decr), Barilus naseeri Mirza, Rafaq & Awain, Barilus vagra (Hamilton), Esomus dais (Hamilton), Lebido kotla (Hamilton), Osteobrama cotil (Hamilton), Puntius conchonius (Hamilton), Puntius sophre (Hamilton), Puntius ticto (Hamilton), Crocochilus diplocheilus (Heckel), Gara goyla (Gray), Cyprinus carpio Linnaeus, Acanthochilus botia (Hamilton), Mystus cavavus (Hamilton), Mystus bleekerii (Day), Bagarius bagarius (Hamilton), Gaffa cana (Hamilton), Sisor rubrofuscus Hamilton, Siganus cavus (Hamilton), Xenotundus canca (Hamilton), Channida nana Hamilton, Glossogobius giboides (Hamilton), Colisa fasciata Bloch & Schneider, Oreochromis aureus (Steindachner).

Fish fauna in this part of the river is very similar to that found in River Chenab. Forty eight species found in Riever Jhelum also found in River Chenab. Only three species namely Barilus modestus Day, Barilus naseeri Mirza, Rafaq & Awain and Lebdeo (Hamilton) are not found in River Chenab. Similarly thirty nine species found in this collection are also found in River Ravi. Twelve fish species present in this collection and not reported from River Ravi are Tor macroplatus (Heckel), Barilus naseeri Mirza, Rafaq & Awain, Cyprinus carpio Linnaeus, Schizothorax plagiotomus Heckel, Acanthochilus botia (Hamilton), Gaffa cana (Hamilton), Bagarius bagarius (Hamilton), Sisor rubrofuscus Hamilton, Gaffa cana (Hamilton), Wallago atta (Bloch & Schneider), Clupeomorus nazi Mirza & Awain and Channa maruia (Hamilton).

The decreased water discharges in River Jhelum over the last fifteen years combined with the sewage added in the river from the Jhelum city have adversely affected the fish population in the river. The populations of the Tor macroplatus (Heckel) have decreased while the Oreochromis aureus (Steindachner) have become established in the upper stretches of the river from Dhand Sheikhupura to Jhelum Bridge. Furthermore, the spawning grounds of the Spotted sarnda (Mirza, Nawaz & Javed) are also under constant threat of poaching. These threats to fish biodiversity need immediate attention and remedial measures.