



Community structure of Coleoptera in Bethuadahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India

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Abstract. We focused on the coleopteran species assemblage in a tropical deciduous forest in the Bethuadahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India. During a 2-year survey, we collected 56 species belonging to 13 families of Coleoptera, in varying relative abundance. Among the species, 15 belong to the family Chrysomelidae, nine to the Staphyllinidae, and four to the Coccinellidae. Our results substantiate the importance of the Bethuadahari Wildlife Sanctuary for the conservation of coleopteran insects.

Key words. Species assemblage; species inventory; Insecta.

INTRODUCTION

Insects are distributed worldwide in all habitats and constitute about half of the global diversity of animals (GULLAN & CRANSTON 1994, GILLOTT 2005). A majority of insect species are beetles, grouped under the order Coleoptera. Of coleopterans, there are about 15,500 described species (nearly 4.5% of the world fauna) recorded from India to date, being with 3,100 endemic for the country (RAMKRISHNA & ALFRED 2007). Ecosystems are dominated by beetle species with diverse morphologies that correspond to their functional roles within the ecosystem. In almost all habitat types, the richness and abundance of beetles are being explored worldwide, including beetle assemblages associated with agroecosystems (BAMBARADENIYA et al. 2004, PETROVA et al. 2006, KUMAR et al. 2009), as well as forests and protected areas (HALME & NIEMELÄ 1993, CHUNG et al. 2000, LUCKY et al. 2002, APIGIAN et al. 2006, JOSHI et al. 2008, GRIMBACHER & STORK 2009, SABU et al. 2011, CHANDRA & GUPTA 2012, THAKARE & ZADE 2012, CAMPOS & HERNÁNDEZ 2013). By assessment of beetle species assemblages, the functional role of beetles in their respective ecosystems can be better understood.

Tropical forests, with ample resources and hospitable habitats, provide an ideal ecosystem for coleopterans (BASSET et al. 2003). In comparison to the similar ecosystems, the functions of the forest ecosystems are in part dependent on the foraging (MATTSON & ADDY 1975, BROWN 1985, SCHOWALTER 1995) and litter processing (PFEIFFER 1996, NAIR 2007) by the beetles and other insects. The beetles represent the single major group

of insects that explore both live and dead plant parts thereby accounting for the dynamic nature of the flow of energy and matter in the ecosystem concerned (LOSEY & VAUGHAN 2006, 2008). Appraisal of the beetle assemblages in forest ecosystems is being emphasized in several studies spanning different geographical areas and suggests their dominance over other insect orders (SCHOWALTER et al. 1986, NOVOTNY & BASSET 2005). Our study is an account of the diversity of Coleoptera in the tropical moist deciduous forest of Bethuadahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India, and highlights the need for conservation planning and management in the reserve. Keeping in view the significance of the beetles in forest ecosystems, the information of the present study may be utilized for their conservation and maintaining the forest as a reserve area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The 66.77 ha Bethuadahari Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS; 23°35'N, 088°23'E; 5 m above sea level) is located in the Nadia district of West Bengal, India (Fig. 1). The wildlife sanctuary now supports a tropical moist deciduous forest, but previously it was degraded and planted forest. The wildlife sanctuary was declared as such on 19 August 1998, under the Notification No. of 2772 of the Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal, India.

The upper canopy of the forest comprised of Teak (*Tectona grandis* Linn. F.), Arjun (*Terminalia arjuna* (Roxb.)), Siris (*Albizia lebbek* (L.) Benth.), Sissoo (*Delbergia sissoo* Roxb.), Sal (*Shorea robusta* Gaertn.), Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King), and Ficus (*Ficus* spp.), while the middle and lower canopies are less demarcated. Trees such as Jamun (*Syzigium cumini*), Minjiri (*Cassia* sp.), Bael (*Aegle marmelos* (Linn)), Atha (*Annona squamosa* Linn), and Hamjam (*Polyalthia suberosa* (Roxb.)), comprise the middle and lower canopy. The shrubs *Cassia tora* Linn, *Ageratum* sp., and *Polygonum* spp., as well as various species of *Colocasia*, dominate the ground vegetation. There are also sparse grasses such as *Imperata* sp. (Ulloo grass), *Paspalum* sp., *Panicum* sp., *Cynodon* sp., and *Brachiaria* sp. that form a mosaic of green patches and

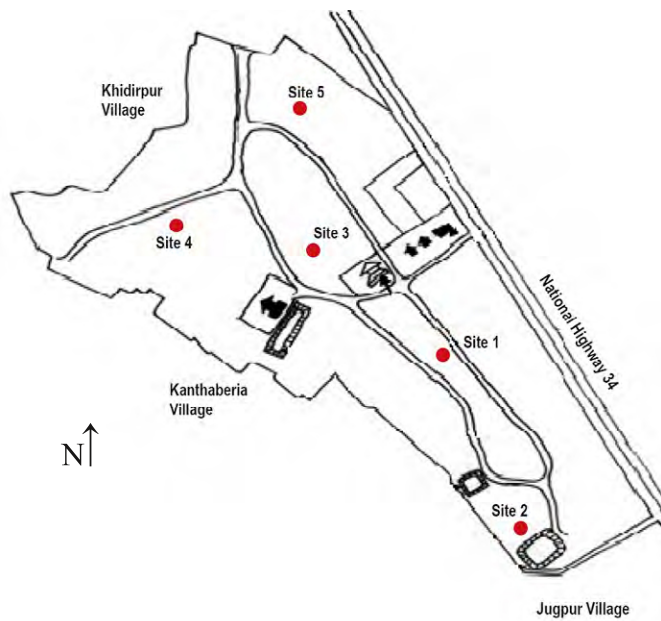


Figure 1. Map of Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India, with the sampling plots denoted by red dots.

open soil.

Data collection and analysis

To collect coleopterans, we employed the quadrat method (BROWER et al. 1998, KREBS 1999), following the random selection of five survey plots in various parts of the forest. Each plot constituting an area of 625 m² (25 × 25 m²) which were separated one from another by at least a distance of 200 m. The plots consisted of a heterogeneous mixture of grass and barren soil as well as shrubs and trees. Within each plot, three quadrats, each 5 × 5 m² were randomly selected, in compliance with the norms of interspersation and randomization such that the samples represent true replicates (HURLBERT 1984).

In each quadrat, we used sweep netting, pitfall trapping, fluorescent light trapping, and hand picking with a net to capture beetles. Different collection methods were employed to ensure that most species were captured. The sweep net used was 30 cm in diameter, 90 cm deep, and with 1.5 mm mesh. Each sweep represented a horizontal swing 0.5 to 2 m above the ground and with an arc between 135° to 180° (against the horizontal plane). At each quadrat, 100 random sweeps were made. One pitfall trap was placed at the center of each quadrat and left for 24 h. These were transparent plastic jars (10 × 10 cm), 1/3 filled with a 2:1 solution of propylene glycol in water (HALME & NIEMELÄ 1993, TABOADA et al. 2010, EARNST & BUDDLE 2013). A light trap was set up at the center of each plot for 10 h (18:00–4:00 h) (LEE et al. 2008). Therefore, beetles collected from each plot comprised of cumulative collections by 3 light trap, 3 pitfall traps, and 3 sweep net samples. Additional collections by hand picking was also employed to include insects directly observed within the quadrat. The hand picking method used a 15 cm net, with each search lasting 15 min each. Consequently, we collected 45 samples from the 5 plots at each sampling operation involving all the methods. Twenty-four sampling operations were carried out, 1 in each

month, from January 2010 to December 2011.

Collected insects were placed in plastic bags or specimen containers and brought to the laboratory in Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata. Specimens were separated into families using CROWSON (1956) and CHOATE (1999), and mainly the numerous volumes on Coleoptera in the *Fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma* (GAHAN 1906, JACOBY 1908, FOWLER 1912, MARSHALL 1916, MAULIK 1919, 1926, 1936, ANDREWES 1929, 1935, CAMERON 1930, 1932, 1934, 1939a, 1939b). Identifications of genera or species were made with the help of the Scientists of the Coleoptera section in the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata. Specimens were deposited in the ZSI (Kolkata).

The data on the relative abundance of each species was used for diversity analysis using BDPro software (MCALEECE et al. 1997). In order to estimate the diversity indices, raw data of each species collected from the plots were pooled together into 24 monthly samples. Using relative abundance as a measure, a discriminant function analysis (MANLY 1994, LEGENDRE & LEGENDRE 1998) was performed to show differences between families of Coleoptera.

RESULTS

The 2-year survey of the forest revealed the presence of at least 56 species of coleopterans belonging to 13 families (Tables 1 and 2). Among the families, Chrysomelidae, Cerambycidae, Brentidae, and were the phytophagous groups (WEISS 1922, SAROOSHI et al. 1979, SILFVERBERG 1989). With 16 species found, Chrysomelidae was the most abundant and species-rich family. Beetles that prey on macro-invertebrates and vertebrates (WEISS 1922, DIXON 2000, OMKAR & PERVEZ 2000) were represented by 18 species belonging to the families Carabidae, Coccinellidae, Lampyridae, Lycidae, Dytiscidae, and Hydrophilidae. There were 16 saprophagous species belonging to 4 families, Scarabaeidae (dung beetles), Staphylinidae (rove beetles), Tenebrionidae (darkling beetle), and Elateridae

Table 1. Representative families of Coleoptera with ascertained species numbers observed in course of sampling of the Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India, during 2010–2011.

Family	Number of species
Phytophagous (about 38%)	
Chrysomelidae	16
Cerambycidae	2
Curculionidae	2
Brentidae	2
Predaceous (about 33%)	
Coccinellidae	6
Lampyridae	1
Lycidae	1
Hydrophilidae	2
Dytiscidae	4
Carabidae	4
Saprophagous (about 30%)	
Scarabaeidae	3
Tenebrionidae	2
Elateridae	2
Staphylinidae	9

Table 2. Species of Coleoptera recorded from Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India (n_i represents relative proportion of the species collected in the total sample; description of 56 species given).

Species name	n_i	Voucher no.	Characters
Family Chrysomelidae			
<i>Altica unicolor</i> (Olivier, 1808)	0.0005	ZSI/5510/17	Antennae not longer than body; not inserted on frontal prominence; tibial spurs absent
<i>Phygasia</i> sp.	0.005	ZSI/5511/17	Possession of a femoral spring mechanism
<i>Monolepta signata</i> (Olivier, 1808)	0.0057	ZSI/5512/17	Elytra bicolor. Intermediate antennal segments thickened in male
<i>Monolepta bifasciata</i> (Hornstedt, 1788)	0.0714	ZSI/5513/17	Elytra black, each elytron with two yellow stains; head, pronotum, legs and abdominal sternites; reddish-brown
<i>Monolepta limbata</i> (Olivier, 1808)	0.0057	ZSI/5514/17	Body shining pale yellow with two dark red spot on each elytron
<i>Monolepta</i> sp.	0.0025	ZSI/5515/17	Body pale brown; elytra, epipleuron, humerus, and scutellum rounded by black border
<i>Aloria</i> sp.	0.002	ZSI/5516/17	Body brownish yellow with black antennae
<i>Phaedon</i> sp.	0.0042	ZSI/5517/17	Body metallic blue with labrum, antennae, tibiae and tarsi blackish
<i>Oides flava</i> (Olivier, 1807)	0.0063	ZSI/5518/17	Head small, deeply inserted into prothorax; pronotum with coarse punctures
<i>Galerucella placida</i> Baly, 1878	0.0035	ZSI/5519/17	Dorsally brown; metasternum and abdominal sternites black
<i>Calomicrus flavovittis</i> Motschulsky, 1858	0.0037	ZSI/5520/17	Dorsally dark brown; antenna, apical area on head, scutellum, ventral side and legs black
<i>Aphthona</i> sp.	0.0035	ZSI/5521/17	Body shining brown with blackish brown longitudinal stripe on each elytron from humerus towards the apex
<i>Hoplasoma unicolor</i> (Illiger, 1800)	0.009	ZSI/5522/17	Strongly developed hind femora
<i>Sphenoraia bicolor</i> (Hope, 1831)	0.0023	ZSI/5523/17	Yellowish brown shining coloration; elytra with subregular punctation and without carinae on disc
<i>Aspidomorpha dorsata</i> (Fabricius, 1787)	0.0018	ZSI/5524/17	Body dark brown with seven black spots on each elytron
<i>Caryedon</i> sp.	0.001	ZSI/5525/17	Body rounded with smooth elytra
Family Coccinellidae			
<i>Coccinella transversalis</i> Fabricius, 1781	0.0107	ZSI/5526/17	Tarsal claws toothed or appendiculate; first ventral abdominal segment with distinct curved coxal lines
<i>Cheilomenes sexmaculata</i> (Fabricius, 1781)	0.0065	ZSI/5527/17	Triangular black stain on the sub-humeral area of elytra followed by a wavy, black post-median band
<i>Illeis indica</i> Timberlake, 1943	0.0115	ZSI/5528/17	Each elytron with three zigzag transversal stripes
<i>Stethorus</i> sp.	0.0123	ZSI/5529/17	Eyes large, distance between eyes as wide as an eye or less; mandibles finely serrate
<i>Sticholotis</i> sp.	0.0118	ZSI/5530/17	Body black; prosternum broadly rounded anteriorly and without longitudinal carinae
<i>Rodolia</i> sp.	0.0073	ZSI/5531/17	Body black; prosternum enlarged and concealing mouth parts entirely
Family Lampyridae			
<i>Luciola</i> sp.	0.0068	ZSI/5532/17	Pubescence slightly yellowish and moderately dense; absence of elytral punctations
Family Lycidae			
<i>Lycostomus</i> sp.	0.0183	ZSI/5534/17	Metathorax epimeron long; many species with glowing organ
Family Scarabaeidae			
<i>Apogonia</i> sp.	0.009	ZSI/5533/17	Posterior angles of the pronotum acute and backwardly pointed
<i>Onthophagus</i> sp.	0.0128	ZSI/5535/17	Middle coxae distant; epipleura absent; elytra reticulated
<i>Anomala</i> sp.	0.0323	ZSI/5536/17	Reddish brown coloration with one black spot at the end of each elytron
Family Hydrophilidae			
<i>Berosus fairmairei</i> Zaitzev, 1908	0.01	ZSI/5537/17	Antennae with lamellate club and the plates composing antennal club flattened
<i>Coelostoma</i> sp.	0.0085	ZSI/5538/17	Light brown colour with deep punctation, emarginated clypeus, elytra elevated along the sutures
Family Brentidae			
<i>Apion</i> sp.	0.0974	ZSI/5539/17	Presence of punctation in pronotum; clypeal margin tridentated; dorsal surface glabrous
<i>Alocentron curvirostre</i> (Gyllenhal, 1833)	0.0451	ZSI/5540/17	Mesosternum without intercoxal process
Family Curculionidae			
<i>Xylosandrus</i> sp.	0.0172	ZSI/5541/17	Hind tarsi clearly 5 segmented; maxillary palpi as long as or longer than antennae; antennae with terminal 3-4 segments forming a distinct club
<i>Hypothenemus</i> sp.	0.0025	ZSI/5542/17	elytra with apical spine and the upper surface malated
Family Dytiscidae			
<i>Hydrovatus</i> sp.	0.011	ZSI/5543/17	Antennal club very long and nine jointed, not carinate
<i>Hydroglyphus</i> sp.	0.011	ZSI/5544/17	Antennae straight, without distinct club; beak present at least in female and pointing directly forward
<i>Copelatus freudei</i> Guignot, 1955	0.007	ZSI/5545/17	Elytra unicolor, entirely brown; body length 3.5–4 mm
<i>Laccophilus</i> sp.	0.008	ZSI/5546/17	Rostrum arched, with deep longitudinal ventral fovea; pronotum campanulate
Family Carabidae			
<i>Cicindela</i> sp.	0.008	ZSI/5547/17	Antennae short with broad club; eyes oval, emarginated, or divided
<i>Coptodera</i> sp.	0.006	ZSI/5548/17	Smaller species with widely separated procoxae
			Elytral striae marked by comparatively small punctures; frons convex

Continued

Table 2. Continued.

Species name	n_i	Voucher no.	Characters
<i>Clivina</i> sp.	0.021	ZSI/5550/17	Large body size greater than 5mm; last visible abdominal segment without any projection; tips of apical segment of maxillary palpi not finely produced
<i>Colluris</i> sp.	0.06	ZSI/5551/17	Pronotum narrow, longer than wide; elytron with apex truncate, exposing last abdominal tergite
Family Tenebrionidae			Tarsal claws simples; front of head with protruding margin extending between the eyes
<i>Gonocephalum</i> sp.	0.029	ZSI/5552/17	Large body, with head, pronotum, and elytra strongly depressed
<i>Scleron</i> sp.	0.055	ZSI/5553/17	Larger in size; pronotum and elytra strongly tuberculated
Family Elateridae			Prothorax firmly joined to mesothorax; antennae inserted under margin of front
<i>Agrypnus</i> sp.	0.077	ZSI/5554/17	Scutellum simples, pentagonal, with dense punctation and without longitudinal carina
<i>Aeoloderma</i> sp.	0.045	ZSI/5555/17	Frons convex, rarely flat, rounded anteriorly, rarely truncated, base usually with fine longitudinally raised carina
Family Staphylinidae			Elytra very short, dorsally exposing 4-7 abdominal segments
<i>Bledius</i> sp.	0.059	ZSI/5556/17	Presence of small well defined pit in prosternum
<i>Acanthoglossa brachycera</i> Kraatz, 1859	0.002	ZSI/5557/17	Head and thorax with reticulate, umbilicate sculpture
<i>Stenus</i> sp.	0.054	ZSI/5558/17	Eyes very large; seventh abdominal segment with a short spine
<i>Astenus</i> sp.	0.005	ZSI/5559/17	Last antennal segment longer than 10th segment
<i>Philonthus</i> sp.	0.004	ZSI/5560/17	The suture and apical margin of elytra broadly reddish yellow
<i>Dibelonetes bengalensis</i> Biswas & Sengupta, 1980	0.004	ZSI/5561/17	Posterior margin of elytra broadly ferruginous red
<i>Cryptobium</i> sp.	0.008	ZSI/5562/17	Antennae geniculate; elytra entirely red
<i>Lathrobium unicolor</i> Kraatz, 1859	0.003	ZSI/5563/17	Species reddish and testaceous; strong punctation in front of head
<i>Paederus fuscipes</i> Curtis, 1826	0.005	ZSI/5564/17	Head dark blue; anterior femora entirely testaceous
Family Cerambycidae			Body elongate; antennae frequently longer than body, inserted on frontal prominence; tibial spurs well developed
<i>Batocera</i> sp.	0.003	ZSI/5565/17	Large body size with greyish black coloration; antennae long
<i>Mesosa</i> sp.	0.017	ZSI/5566/17	Antennae filiform, unarmed and short, extend beyond elytral apices; lateral margins of pronotum without spines

(click beetles) (CHITTENDEN 1915, WEISS 1922). Of all species, about 38% species were phytophagous, mostly chrysomelids, followed by predaceous (about 33%), and saprophagous (about 30%) species.

The relative abundance was higher for *Apion* sp., *Monoilepta bifasciata* (Hornstedt, 1788), *Agrypnus* sp. *Colluris* sp., *Bledius* sp., *Scleron* sp. and *Stenus* sp. while the species such as *Altica unicolor* (Olivier, 1808) and *Caryedon* sp. were least often collected.

On the basis of the species richness and abundance of coleopteran in the 24 monthly samples, the Shannon–Weaver diversity index (H') was between 1.17 and 3.44, with a mean value of 3.11. The corresponding evenness values (H_{even}) was 0.65 and 0.85 with a mean value of 0.81. However, the monthly

differences in the species representation was obvious, possibly a reflection of the environmental regulation of the population of the concerned species (SHE analysis; Fig. 2). In terms of the

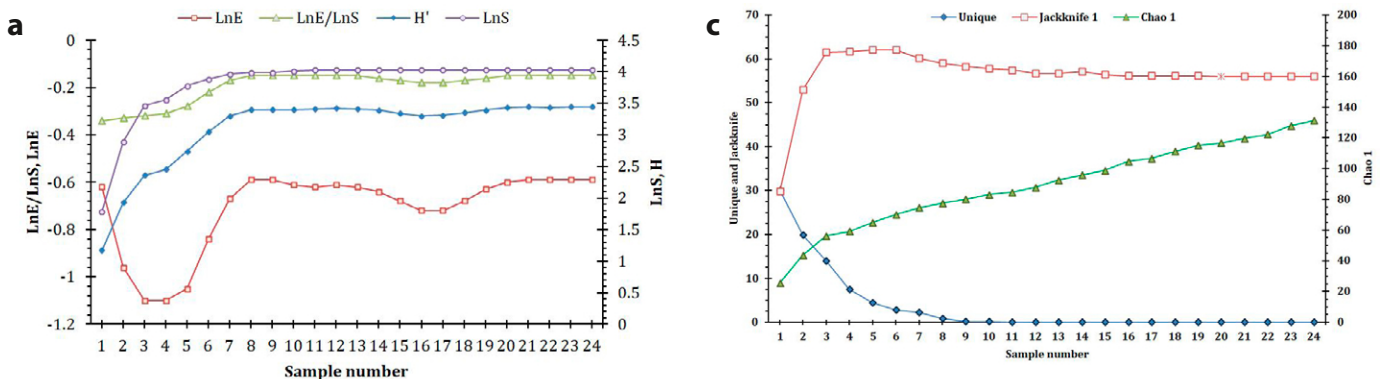


Figure 2. The SHE analysis [S (species richness), H (information) and E (evenness) in the samples] (a), species richness S, and abundance N (b), and various measures of species richness (Unique species, Chao1, and Jackknife1) (c), for Coleoptera, calculated on the data of 24 samples of different months from January, 2010 to December, 2011, in Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India. The filled in triangles mark the sample where the species saturation was reached in the estimates in b and c.

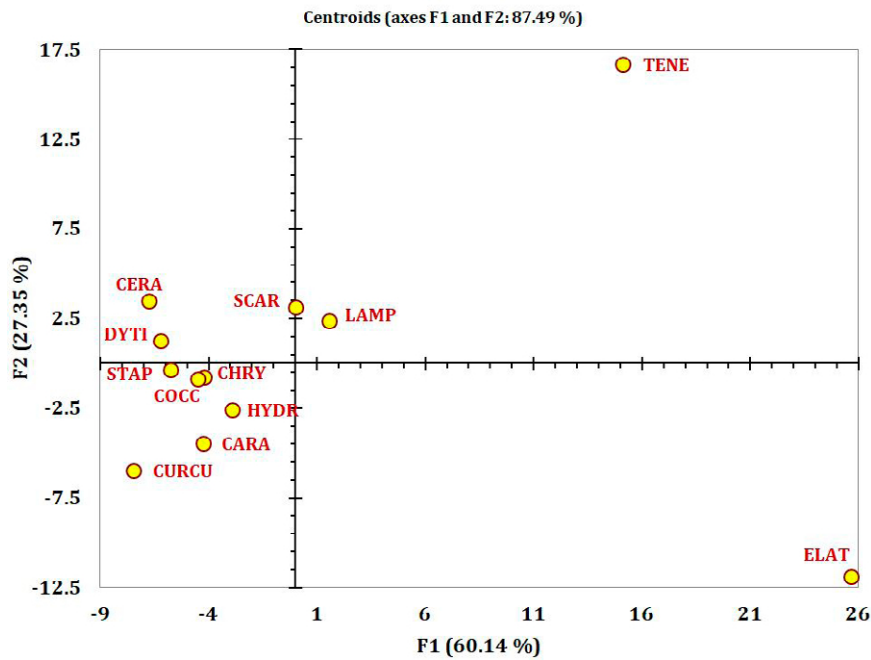
beetle individuals in the samples and the species richness, the saturation was reached at the sample number 19 (Fig. 2), which is also reflected through the non-parametric measures of the species diversity such as Jackknife 1 (species saturation in 20th sample) (Fig. 2). The differences in the species richness among the samples were also reflected through the Chao 1 estimator, estimator of the unique and doubleton species in the samples. In comparison to the Chao 1, the Jackknife 1 estimate provided a better descriptor owing to similarity with the observed saturation

of the species richness in the samples.

The discriminant function analysis indicates considerable differences in the relative representations of families of Coleoptera as shown in the biplot of Table. 3. The axes of the biplot explained about 87% of the variability of the data on the relative abundance of the coleopteran families. On comparison, the two families, Elateridae and Tenebrionidae, were oriented in different coordinates to rest of the families. The Fisher's distance among the pairs of the families remained significant for

Table 3. The results of Discriminant function analysis (DA) represented through the biplot (a), Eigen values (b) and the Fisher's distance among the different families of Coleoptera observed. (CARA: Carabidae, CERA: Cerambycidae, CHRY: Chrysomellidae, COCC: Coccinellidae, DYTI: Dytiscidae, ELAT: Elateridae, HYDR: Hydrophilidae, LAMP: Lampyridae, SCAR: Scarabaeidae, CURCU: Curculionidae, STAP: Staphylinidae, TENE: Tenebrionidae).

a. Biplot showing ordination of the Coleoptera families presented in centroids.



b. Eigen values of factors and canonical correlation coefficients.

Measures	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Eigen value	120.2	54.7	15.1	2.871	2.468	2.06
Discrimination (%)	60.1	27.4	7.557	1.437	1.235	1.031
Cumulative %	60.1	87.5	95.1	96.5	97.7	98.8
Canonical correlations function	0.996	0.991	0.968	0.861	0.844	0.82

c. Fisher's distance (significant values, *P* < 0.05, are indicated in bold).

	CARA	CERA	CHRY	COCC	DYTI	ELAT	HYDR	LAMP	SCAR	CURCU	STAP
CERA	8.01										
CHRY	3.03	2.91									
COCC	2.7	2.73	0.5								
DYTI	4.25	1.92	0.72	0.83							
ELAT	48.65	63.46	49.66	50.56	58.14						
HYDR	1.46	4.95	1.36	1.15	2.64	44.94					
LAMP	5.99	6.5	3.11	4.33	4.71	39.57	3.87				
SCAR	11.47	4.79	4.59	5.2	4.9	45.3	6.98	5.91			
CURCU	1.77	9.18	4.02	4.34	5.34	57.59	3.28	8.75	14.31		
STAP	2.8	3.2	0.38	0.74	0.79	54.98	1.71	4.05	5.85	3.67	
TENE	40.39	35.62	34.33	35.08	35.47	46.76	34.57	20.2	26.82	50.34	36.48

most of the cases reflecting the differences in the representation of the different species under the families.

DISCUSSION

Locally, terrestrial insect diversity depends on the resource availability and habitat, while climate determines diversity of insects and terrestrial arthropods, which is evident from biogeographical studies worldwide (BARBERENA-ARIAS & AIDE 2002, DEANS et al. 2005, HIRAO et al. 2007, RICHARDS & WINDSOR 2007). For example, about 1470 beetle species were recorded over a 4-year period in lowland tropical rainforests of Australia, but with a patchy distribution of species over time (GRIMBACHER & STORK 2009). In comparison, 50 species of beetles belonging to 11 families recorded from mesic undisturbed tundra in Nunavut, Canada (ERNST & BUDDLE 2013). In tropical forests of Brazil, dung beetle assemblages vary between locations (21 species in Bahia, VIEIRA & SILVA 2012; 33 species in Santa Catarina, CAMPOS & HERNÁNDEZ 2013) and are considerably greater than the present observation of just 3 species. In pine-dominated forests, VANDERWEL et al. (2006), found that xylophagous families Cerambycidae and Scolytidae were more abundant; in the present study, these families were represented by 4 species. The number of carabid species recorded (4 species) in the present study also is low compared to a study by ABDEL-DAYEM (2012) in Egypt (39 species in 28 genera). In Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh, India, a moist deciduous forest bordered with marsh and interspersed hillocks, is rich in beetles, with at least 44 scarabaeid species (CHANDRA & AHIRWAR 2005). However, in terms of the number of species, the present observation (57 species) was greater than the 26 species recorded from deciduous forests of Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve, central India (CHANDRA & GUPTA 2012) and the 12 species recorded from Melghat Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, India (THAKARE & ZADE 2012). In comparison to the tropical moist deciduous forests of Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, the steppe grasslands of Czech Republic appears to have a more diverse beetle assemblage with 103 being weevil (Curculionioidea), while rest were representatives of Anthribidae (4 species), Rhynchitidae (5 species), Apionidae (14 species) and Nanophyidae (1 species) (STEJSKAL 2004). From these comparisons, it is apparent that plant assemblages, landscapes, and climatic factors strongly influence beetle species richness. Apart from human-induced disturbance, the seasonal factors and resource availability in Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary may cause variations in beetle abundance in the survey area. In Buxa National Park, West Bengal, high quality habitats in a mosaic of forest types account for a much greater richness of beetles (SARKAR et al. 2014, 2015a, 2015b).

The dynamics of plant succession and the resultant variations in the habitat complexity influences the insect species assemblages (BROWN 1985). Such changes (BUSKIRK & BUSKIRK 1976, ARUN & VIJAYAN 2004) may limit the spatial distribution and encounter in course of collection using the pitfall traps or sweep nets. The cryptic species residing in the litters and within the degrading woods may have been missed by the sampling methods used.

In moist deciduous forests, such as found in the Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary, the depth of leaf litter, as well as the litter-dwelling invertebrate fauna, including coleopterans, varies with the seasons. The forest of the Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary is dominated by *Tectona grandis*, which may account for less variability in the detritus on the forest floor. In a stable forest ecosystem, the availability of the detritus, including decaying wood and faecal matter of larger herbivores, are high in relation to live leaves. Although abundance of detritivore species of coleopterans was higher than the strictly phytophagous species, in general, the 2 groups varied in accordance with seasonal variations of the resources available. Among the coleopterans, the Scarabaeidae are relatively specialized detritus-associated taxa and involved in the decomposition process (CHITTENDEN 1915, WEISS 1922, WEINREICH 1968). The presence of scarabaeids accelerates litter decomposition and helps maintain soil quality (HALFFTER & EDMONDS 1982, HANSKI & CAMBEFORT 1991, SLADE et al. 2007, NICHOLS et al. 2008, SIMMONS & RIDSDILL-SMITH 2011). The representatives of Staphylinidae, Tenebrionidae, and Elateridae, contribute to the multiple functional roles (MATTSON & ADDY 1975, BROWN 1985, SCHOWALTER 1995, PFEIFFER 1996, DIXON 2000, OMKAR & PERVEZ 2000, BASSET et al. 2003, NAIR 2007) in sustaining the forest ecosystem. The ecological role of coleopteran and other insect groups in deciduous forests such as in Bethudahari Wildlife Sanctuary may be better assessed by evaluating the trophic guild structure and the resources available over the entire season. Further studies would be beneficial to decipher interactions between the insect species and forest resources and sustaining the forest ecosystem.

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