



MSc Degree in Environmental Science

DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS, AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS AND FARMER  
RESPONSES TO INDIAN PEACOCKS (*Pavo cristatus*) IN THE MATALE  
DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

A dissertation submitted

by

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### Abstract

In this study, Demographic Patterns, Agricultural impacts and farmer responses to Indian Peacocks (*Pavo cristatus*) in the Matale District, Sri Lanka, was investigated. Merging qualitative and quantitative strategies, data were extracted from 275 observation reports and 22 farmer interviews from 11 Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions. The quantitative information indicates a general occurrence of peacocks in paddy fields with the highest spots observed during early morning and where vegetables and paddy are cultivated. Sighting patterns showed that birds occur with evenly spread genders and age groups, indicating balance within the population. Regardless of symbolic and cultural significance in Buddhism and Hinduism, to farmers from different communities, peacocks are far and wide known as pests when it comes to agriculture. The qualitative findings picked up on frequent damage to crops, especially vegetables, with farmers using a variety of locally adapted deterrents most of which were ineffective. Cultural suspicion of peacocks dictated mitigation measures, resulting in internal conflict for most farmers. Also, a limited understanding of wildlife regulations and no institutional support left most farmers exposed and uncertain of legal avenues. This research concludes that solving the peacock-agriculture conflict entails clear policy direction, farmer education, environmentally friendly deterrent technology, and local management approaches in an effort to achieve a balance between wildlife conservation and agricultural production.

**Keywords:** *Peacocks (Pavo cristatus), Farmer Perceptions and Mitigation, Human-Wildlife Conflict*