

ASSESSMENT OF UNDERWATER BIODIVERSITY OF SAINT MARTIN'S ISLAND OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Occupying less than one percent of the ocean floor, reefs are home to more than twenty-five percent of marine life. Saint Martin's Island (SMI) is the only island in Bangladesh where a reef-like ecosystem is found. An underwater survey was conducted to uncover the underwater biodiversity on this island in the winter seasons from 2016 to 2019. The photographs of these species were captured by scuba diving and snorkeling in a water depth of about 3 to 7 meters. The study revealed 131 faunal and 18 floral species of different taxa viz. Bivalves (5 species), Crabs (5 spp.), Feather star (1 sp.), Fireworm (1 sp.), Fishes (53 spp.), Flatworm (1 sp.), Hard corals (27 spp.), Hermit crab (1 sp.), Jellyfishes (3 spp.), Lobster (1 sp.), Octopus (1 sp.), Sea anemones (3 spp.), Sea cucumber (1 sp.), Sea fans (8 spp.), Sea fern (1 sp.), Sea slug (6 spp.), Sea turtle (1 sp.), Sea snail (1 sp.), Sea star (1 sp.), Sea urchin (1 sp.), Sea whip (1 sp.), Sponges (3 spp.), Tubeworms (4 spp.), Zoanthid coral (2 spp.), and Seaweed (18 spp.). Coral bleaching was also observed in this study. The present study exposes the hidden beauties of rich underwater biodiversity of this island to the people with the hope to take part in supporting and conserving this island by the tourists, related stakeholders and government.

Keywords: Saint Martin' Island, underwater survey, snorkeling, scuba diving, coral.