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Tree and Shrub Species at Lower Atbara River Basin, Northeastern Sudan

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Abstract

This research represents a study of the vegetation of Lower Atbara River, which is located in eastern Sudan, and the northward areas. Eastern Sudan, which is divided between desert and semi-desert regions, includes Al Butanah, the Gash Delta, the Red Sea Hills, and the coastal plain of the Red Sea. Although Eastern Sudan is very rich in natural vegetation, very few flora studies were conducted in this region. Except for some studies elaborating on fodder trees in Butana area, Atbara River area has not been studied vegetationally.

The main objective of this study is to document the tree and shrub species of Lower Atbara River. A general field survey to the area that included the terrain, soil, climate, the population and a survey to the trees and shrubs was also conducted using Geographical Position System (GPS) with the aim of making a full description to these tree and shrub species on the two banks of Atbara River. Recent field samples (young branches, leaves, flowers and some fruits) of the trees and shrubs were collected, each sample kept separately in a small cloth kit. Botanical check list was used to identify species.

Nineteen (19) tree and shrub species in the area are documented and briefly described focusing on the pattern of growth and the distinguishing characteristics of the plant. The study has resulted in one new species *Prosopis chilensis* that was not yet mentioned in the study area in previous Sudan Flora references.

The study recommends the preservation of the rare and important tree species in the area especially *Hyphaene thebaica* and its re-cultivation and updating of the flora of Sudan.

Keywords: Lower Atbara river, shrubs, Sudan, trees