

## Original Research Article

# Physico-chemical Factors Regulating Cladoceran Community Dynamics in the Floodplain Wetlands of Subansiri River Basin, N.E. India

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**Abstract:** The present study evaluated population dynamics of cladoceran in relation to water quality parameters in the flood plains of Subansiri River basin. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between cladoceran abundance and water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen (DO), biological oxygen demand (BOD), free carbon dioxide ( $\text{FCO}_2$ ), total alkalinity (TA), total hardness (TH), calcium hardness (CaH), chlorides, nitrate-nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ), phosphate phosphorus ( $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$ ), pH, air temperature (AT), water temperature (WT), salinity, specific conductivity (SC) and total dissolved solids (TDS) in three categories of flood plains: deep water rice field (DWR), flood plain lakes (FPL) and oxbow lake (OBL) demonstrate location specific variability in the regulation of cladoceran abundance. A positive correlation with TA ( $r=0.118, 0.153, 0.123$ );  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  ( $r=0.019, 0.355, 0.383$ ); AT ( $r=0.381, 0.094, 0.267$ ); WT ( $r=0.519, 0.033, 0.287$ ) and negative correlation with TDS ( $r=-0.752, -0.230, -0.045$ ) in DWR, FPL and OBL respectively indicated more influence of chemical factors on community dynamics of cladoceran rather physical factors. All other parameters like DO, BOD, TH, CaH, pH Chloride,  $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$  also influences cladoceran abundance. Study revealed that seasonality of water quality parameters influence dynamics of floodplain biotic community.

**Keywords:** Cladocera, Community dynamic, Correlation, Density, Flood plain wetland, Water quality.

## Introduction

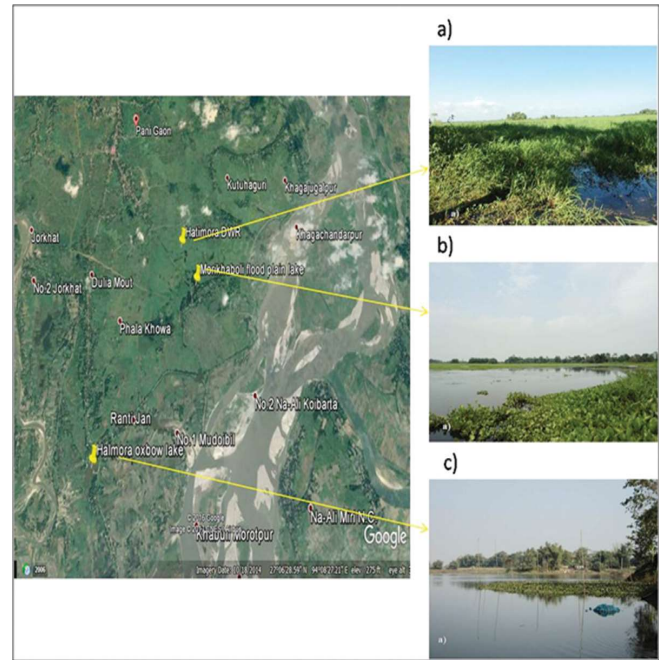
Flood plain wetlands are heterogeneous ecosystems in floodplains of river system which tend to integrate upstream and catchment in all geographic regions (Tockner *et al.*, 2000; Junk and Wantzen, 2006). A large numbers of diversified floodplain wetlands are existed at the corridor of river Barak, Brahmaputra and their tributaries in Assam (Sugunan, 1997). River Subansiri is one of the major tributary of Brahmaputra basin with a large numbers of floodplain wetlands viz. flood plain lakes, oxbow lakes and deep water rice fields. These wetlands harbour rich biological diversity besides supporting significant fishery and agriculture in the downstream area of

river Subansiri (Gogoi, 2017). The ecology of these floodplain wetland are regulated by four major factors: dry season, a high and sudden increase of river flow, increase in particulate material and clear water conditions (Gabellone *et al.*, 2001). The temporal variability of flood plain community dynamics is linked to the magnitude of ecological process (Ward *et al.*, 2002).

Cladoceran are zooplankton which serves as an intermediate in energy transfer and play essential role in recycling of nutrients in aquatic ecosystems (Urabe *et al.*, 2002; Hessen *et al.*, 2003). They are filter feeders that feed on

nanoplanktons, detritus, bacteria and phytoplankton (Balayla and Moss, 2004; Gogoi et al., 2016) finally available as natural diet for the fishes (Qin and Fast, 1997; Suresh Kumar, 2000). They can respond to variety of ecological factor thus have long been recognized as useful ecological and paleolimnological indicators (Drenner et al., 2009; Rumes et al., 2011). They are often used as alternative to reconstruct past environmental conditions of any aquatic ecosystems as their shells preserve well in sediments (Kamenik et al., 2007; Smol, 2008).

Floodplain wetlands experiences large fluctuation in volume of water which greatly influences dynamics of plankton or production of plankton within the habitat. Cladoceran community dynamic is particularly distinctive as population maxima developed rapidly as the wetlands are filled with water (Twombly and Lewis, 1989). The parthenogenetic reproduction favours cladoceran to colonise rapidly in favourable environment (Brendonck and De Meester, 2003). The water quality, nutrients, algal source, macrophytes, invertebrates and fish influences community dynamics of cladoceran (Peretyatko et al., 2009; Boven and Brendonck, 2009). Cladocerans are



**Fig. 2.** Study area- a) Morikhaboli deep water rice field b) Morikhaboli floodplain lake and c) Halmora oxbow lake.

highly sensitive to water quality and could serve as model species in environmental toxicology (Siciliano et al., 2015). However, no any scientific endeavour had ever made to understand the role of water quality parameters on population dynamics of cladoceran in the floodplain habitats of N.E India. Therefore, the present study was designed to evaluate influences of varying physico-chemical factors in regulating cladoceran community.

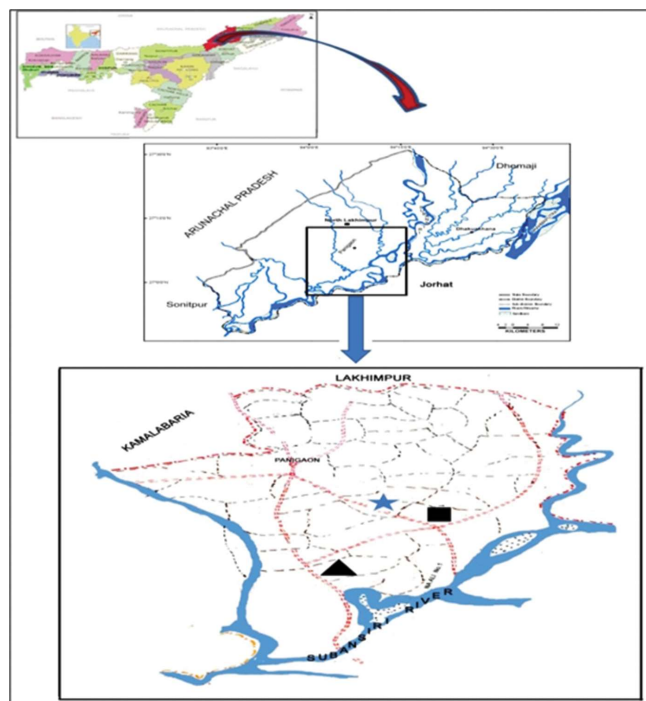
**Materials and methods**

**Study area**

The present investigations were conducted in Hatimora DWR (deep water rice field), Morikhaboli beel (floodplain lake) and Halmora dubi (oxbow lake) located in between 27°.02 and 27°.15 northern latitude and 93°.99 and 94°.15 east longitude in the floodplain of Subansiri river of Lakhimpur district, Assam (Fig. 1 and 2).

**Sampling and analysis**

Sampling of plankton and water were accomplished in three different categories of floodplain wetlands at monthly interval from 12 selected sampling sites at morning hour (6.00



**Fig. 1.** Map showing the study areas in Subansiri flood plain (★ Hatimora DWR, ■ Morikhaboli floodplain lake and ▲ Halmora oxbow lake).

am to 10 am) for a period of two years from May, 2013 to April, 2015. A total of 144 numbers of plankton samples were collected from four selected sites of each study area through filtration of 100 litres of subsurface water with the aid of plankton net (mesh size 60  $\mu\text{m}$ ). The filtrate collected in vial attached at the bottom core of plankton net were transferred to labeled plankton vial and immediately preserved in 5% formalin. In DWR field, sampling period was restricted for six months in a year. Dissolved oxygen, biological oxygen demand, free carbon dioxide, total alkalinity, total hardness, calcium hardness, chloride, nitrate-nitrogen and phosphate phosphorus were determined using standard laboratory methods (APHA, 2005; Dutta, 2011; Saikia and Das, 2014). A celsius thermometer (scale ranging from 0-100°C) was used to measure surface water temperature of water. Water analyser (Model: 371, Systronics) was used to measure pH, salinity, specific conductivity, total dissolved solids of water.

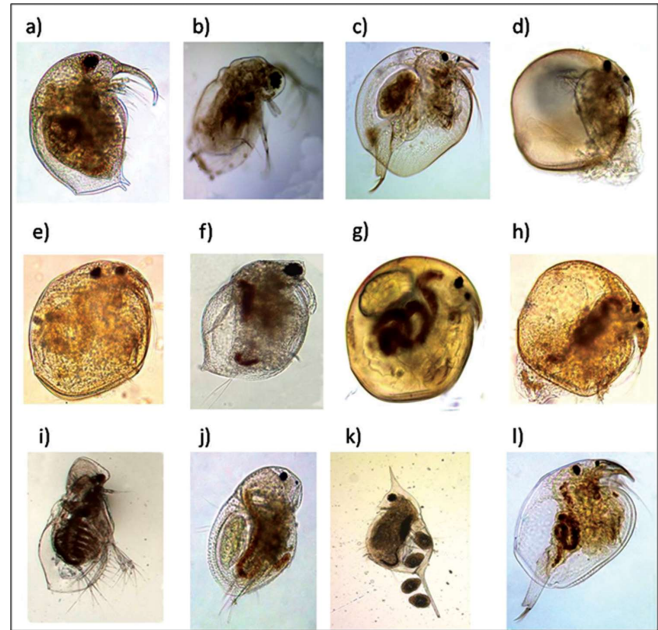
### Statistical analysis

The quantitative studies were carried out following Lackey's (1938) drop count method and the values were expressed in terms of individual  $\text{L}^{-1}$ . All the statistical analysis was performed by using Microsoft Excel statistical program (MS-Excel), PAST (Version 3.07) and SPSS. The coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) was calculated following Pearson's correlation analysis.

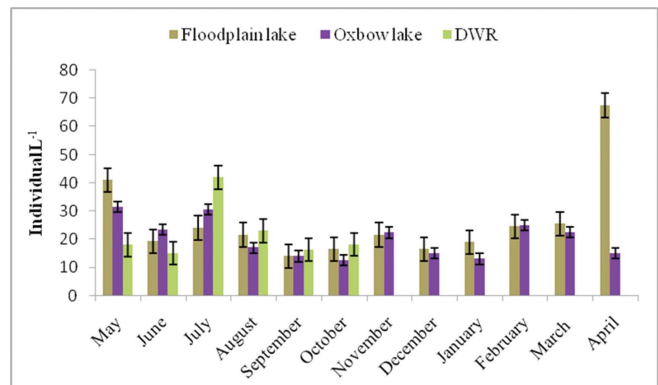
## Results

### Cladoceran Community dynamics

Cladoceran diversity was represented by the occurrence of both common and rare species (Fig. 3). The community dynamics exhibited ecosystem variability however attaining maximum peak in summer season in the entire study area. Population density was maximum during July followed by August whereas it was minimum during June exhibited a higher peak followed by two lower population peaks in DWR. It was maximum during April whereas it was minimum during December in floodplain lake. Highest density was recorded in July whereas it was lowest during December in oxbow lake



**Fig. 3.** Some of the common and rare species of cladoceran documented in Subansiri floodplain wetland a) *Bosmina longirostris* b) *Moina micrura* c) *Celsinotum macronyx* d) *Chydorus eurynatus* e) *Chydorus ovalis* f) *Ceriodaphnia reticulata* g) *Chydorus parvus* h) *Chydorus sphaericus* j) *Diaphanosoma dubium* k) *Macrothrix spinosa* k) *Daphnia lumholtzi* and l) *Kurzia longirostris*.



**Fig. 4.** Density of cladocera (indL<sup>-1</sup>) in different months in Hatimora DWR, Morikhaboli floodplain lake and Halmora oxbow lake during 2013-2015.

(Fig. 4). Month has significant effect on population density and pattern ( $p < 0.05$ ; ANOVA).

### Physico-chemical characteristic of water

The maximum and minimum ranges of water quality recorded in the study are presented in Table- 1. The DO ranges between

**Table 1.** Physico-chemical parameters of water in the wetlands of Subansiri floodplain.

SL. No.	Parameters	Hatimora DWR	Morikhaboli floodplain lake	Halmora oxbow lake
1	DO (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	3.50-7.20	4.00-8.10	3.75-9.20
2	BOD (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	1.00-2.18	1.00-2.52	1.00-3.20
3	FCO <sub>2</sub> (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	6.00-14.1	4.00-12.10	2.20-12.10
4	TA (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	21.06-113.50	21.90-98.0	19.0-93.0
5	TH (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	20.80-86.00	31.40-87.20	32.4-65.00
6	CaH (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	8.00-25.00	8.00-25.26	8.00-18.97
7	Chloride (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	7.00-18.85	8.00-31.00	6.20-24.81
8	NO <sub>3</sub> -N (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.22-1.37	0.21-2.36	0.23-1.62
9	PO <sub>4</sub> -P (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.39-1.36	0.03-1.11	0.10-1.33
10	pH	6.00-7.80	6.00-9.10	6.00-9.00
11	AT (°C)	25.00-32.00	18.00-32.00	18.0-32.00
12	WT(°C)	26.00-29.00	20.00-31.00	18.0-29.00
13	Salinity (ppt)	0.06-2.05	0.08-2.16	0.08-2.03
14	SC (mS)	0.18-1.24	0.06-1.47	0.08-1.29
15	TDS (ppt)	0.04-0.97	0.04-0.83	0.04-0.76

DO: Dissolved oxygen, BOD: Biological oxygen demand, TA: Total alkalinity, TH: Total hardness, CaH: Calcium hardness, NO<sub>3</sub>-N : Nitrate-nitrogen, PO<sub>4</sub>-P : Phosphate phosphorus, AT: Air temperature, WT; Water temperature, SC: Specific conductivity, TDS: Total dissolved solids.

3.00 and 9.20, being highest in oxbow lake and lowest in DWR. BOD ranges between 1.00 and 3.20, being highest in oxbow lake and lowest in all study area. FCO<sub>2</sub> ranges between 2.20 and 14.1, being highest in DWR and lowest in oxbow lake. TA ranges between 19.00 and 113.50, being highest in DWR and lowest in oxbow lake. TH ranges between 20.80 and 87.20, being highest in floodplain lake and lowest in DWR. CaH ranges between 8.0 and 25.26, being highest in floodplain lake and lowest in all study area. Chloride ranges between 6.20 and 31.00 being highest in floodplain lake and lowest in oxbow lake. NO<sub>3</sub>-N ranges between 0.21 and 2.36, being highest and lowest in floodplain lake. PO<sub>4</sub>-P range between 0.03 and 1.36, being highest in DWR and lowest in floodplain lake. pH ranges between 6.00 and 9.10, being highest in floodplain lake and lowest in all study area. AT ranges between 18.00 and 32.00, being lowest in both floodplain lake and oxbow lake and highest in all study area. WT ranges between 8.00 and 31.00, being highest in floodplain lake and lowest in oxbow lake. Salinity ranges between 0.06 and 2.03, being

**Table 2.** Coefficient of Correlation (r) between cladoceran density and physico-chemical parameters in the wetlands of Subansiri flood plain wetlands during the study period.

SL. No.	Parameters	Hatimora DWR	Morikhaboli floodplain lake	Halmora oxbow lake
1	DO (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.297	0.092	-0.170
2	BOD (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.341	0.284	-0.126
3	FCO <sub>2</sub> (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.177	-0.546	-0.590
4	TA (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.118	0.153	0.123
5	TH (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.008	0.109	-0.388
6	CaH (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.320	0.267	-0.454
7	Chloride (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.153	0.313	-0.177
8	NO <sub>3</sub> -N (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.019	0.355	0.383
9	PO <sub>4</sub> -P (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.022	0.004	0.210
10	pH	-0.209	0.511	0.075
11	AT(°C)	0.381	0.094	0.267
12	WT(°C)	0.519	0.033	0.287
13	Salinity (ppt)	0.275	-0.693	0.159
14	SC (mS)	0.223	-0.550	-0.083
15	TDS (ppt)	-0.752	-0.230	-0.045

highest in DWR and lowest in oxbow lake. SC ranges between 0.08 and 1.47, being highest in oxbow lake and lowest in floodplain lake. TDS ranges between 0.04 and 0.83, being highest and lowest in floodplain lake.

**Correlation of cladoceran density with water quality**

The correlation coefficient (r) value between cladoceran density and water quality parameters are presented in Table- 2. The estimated correlation coefficient (r) values indicated ecosystem variability of water quality parameters in regulating cladoceran community. DO exhibit inverse correlation in both DWR (r=-0.297) and oxbow lake (r=-0.170) and positive correlation in floodplain lake (r=0.092) (Fig. 5). BOD shows positive correlation in both DWR (r=0.341) and floodplain lake (r=0.284) and negative correlation in oxbow lake (r=-0.126). FCO<sub>2</sub> shows positive relation in DWR (r=0.177) and inverse relation in both floodplain lake (r=-0.546) and oxbow lake (r=-0.590). TA exhibit positive correlation in entire studied ecosystem (DWR, r=0.118; FPL, r=0.153; and OBL, r=0.123) (Fig. 6). TH shows positive relationship in both DWR (r=0.008) and floodplain lake (r=0.109) and negative relation in oxbow lake (r=-0.388). CaH shows negative relation in both DWR (r=-

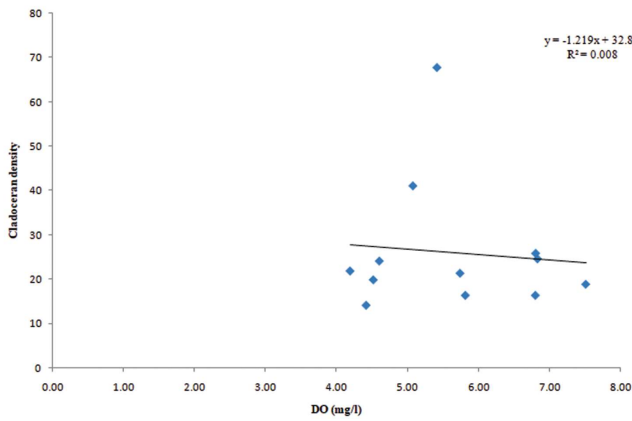


Fig. 5. Correlation between Cladocera and dissolved oxygen.

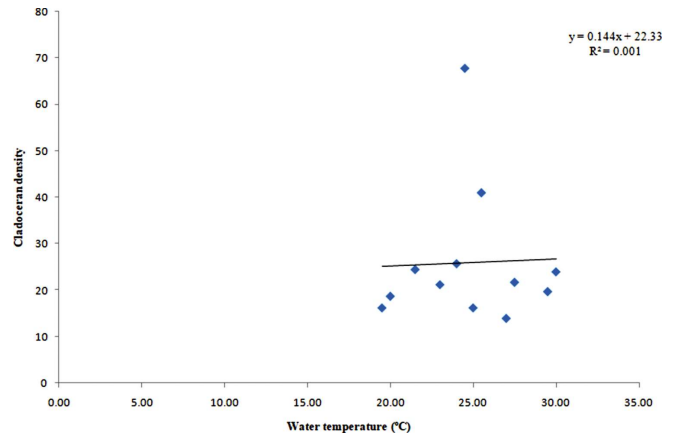


Fig. 8. Correlation between Cladocera and water temperature.

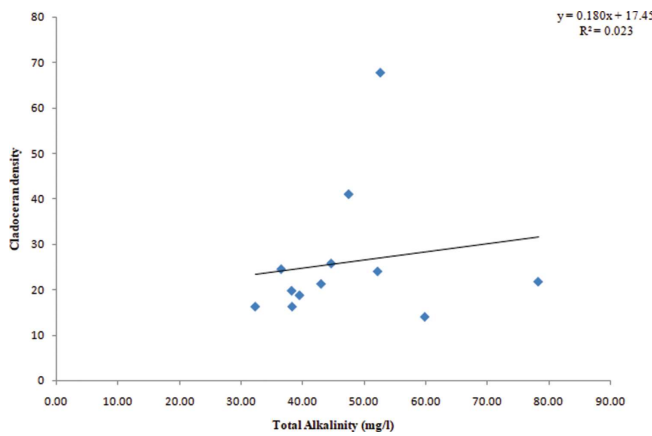


Fig. 6. Correlation between Cladocera and total alkalinity.

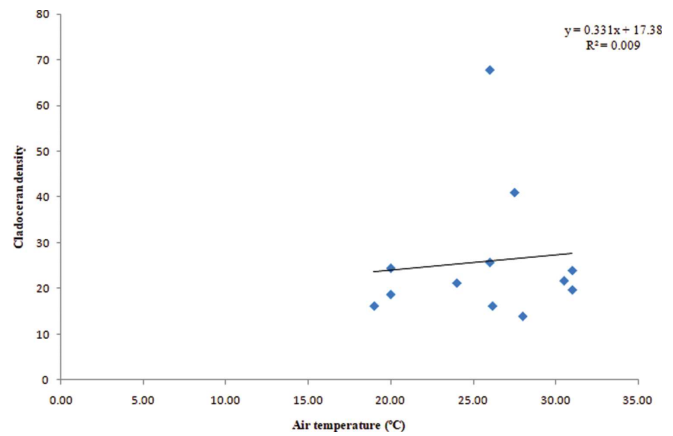


Fig. 9. Correlation between Cladocera and air temperature.

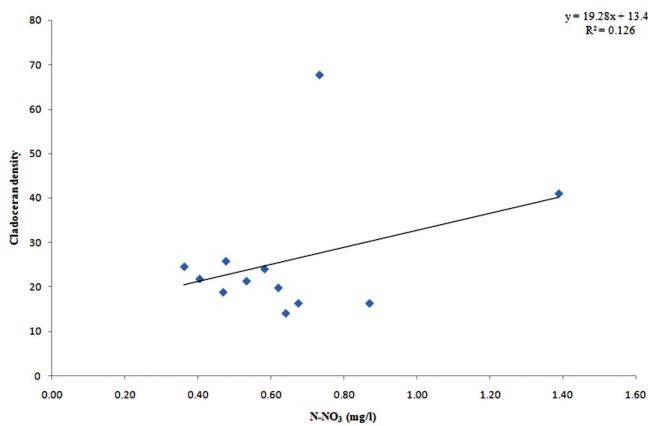


Fig. 7. Correlation between Cladocera and nitrate nitrogen.

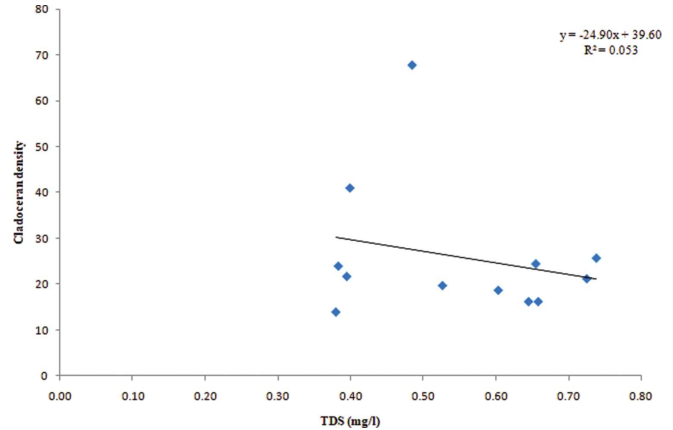


Fig. 10. Correlation between Cladocera and total dissolved solids.

0.320) and oxbow lake ( $r=-0.454$ ) and positive relation in floodplain lake ( $r=0.267$ ). Chloride exhibit negative relation in both DWR ( $r=-0.153$ ) and oxbow lake ( $r=-0.177$ ) and positive relation in floodplain lake ( $r=0.313$ ).  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  exhibit positive

correlation in entire studied ecosystem (DWR,  $r=0.019$ ; FPL,  $r=0.355$ ; and OBL,  $r=0.383$ ) (Fig. 7).  $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$  shows positive relationship in both floodplain lake ( $r=0.004$ ) and oxbow lake ( $r=0.210$ ) and negative relation in DWR ( $r=-0.022$ ). pH

exhibited positive relation in both floodplain lake ( $r=0.511$ ) and oxbow lake ( $r=0.075$ ) and negative relationship in DWR ( $r=-0.209$ ). WT exhibit positive correlation in entire studied ecosystem (DWR,  $r=0.519$ ; FPL,  $r=0.033$ ; and OBL,  $r=0.287$ ) (Fig. 8). AT also exhibit same positive relationship in the entire studied areas (DWR,  $r=0.381$ ; FPL,  $r=0.094$ ; and OBL,  $r=0.267$ ) (Fig. 9). Salinity exhibited positive relationship in both DWR ( $r=0.275$ ) and oxbow lake ( $r=0.159$ ) and negative relationship in floodplain lake ( $r=-0.693$ ). SC exhibited positive relationship in DWR ( $r=0.223$ ) and negative relationship in both floodplain lake ( $r=-0.550$ ) and oxbow lake ( $r=-0.083$ ). TDS show inverse correlation in all the habitats (DWR,  $r=-0.752$ , FPL,  $r=-0.230$ ; oxbow lake,  $r=-0.045$ ) (Fig. 10).

## Discussion

The abundance of cladocera in wetlands habitats were influenced by temperature, rainfall, water quality, nutrients, macrophytes and flood pulse (Ghidini *et al.*, 2009; Kiss *et al.*, 2014). The pattern of community dynamic observed in the study was in agreement with bimodal peak observed by Yarwood (2005), Shah and Pandit (2013) and Kiros *et al.* (2014). The highest population density observed in the present study (May to July) were analogous with the observation of Bothár and Kiss (1990) and Gulyás (1995). The summer peak might have been ascribed to multiple factors that include favorable temperature, high nutrient condition, food availability and hatching of resting eggs (Dejen *et al.*, 2004; Yarwood, 2005; Okogwu, 2010). The low population density during autumn and winter seasons were attributed to unfavorable temperature, limited availability of food and other physico-chemical parameters during this period.

The ranges of various physico-chemical parameters found to be conducive for the planktonic growth and the community dynamics of cladoceran are regulated by a group of physico-chemical factors operating differently in each of the ecosystem. The variation in measure of water quality parameters among the studied ecosystem are related to several ecological factors operated in different environmental conditions. Seasonal and climatic changes, precipitation, wind

action and the pattern of hydrological cycle determine the water quality of an aquatic ecosystem (Tundisi and Straskraba, 1999; Basu *et al.*, 2010).

The positive correlation of cladoceran abundance with total alkalinity, nitrate nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ), air temperature, water temperature and inverse relation with TDS signifies that these parameters has significant role in pattern of community dynamics. The positive correlation of cladoceran with TA was similar with the observation of Deepthi and Yamakanamardi (2014) and Lingampally *et al.* (2018). Cladoceran abundance was correlated with the increase in nitrate content as it may surplus the growth of phytoplankton. The increasing amount of surface run off during summer could enhance the total alkalinity and nitrate content resulting in growth of cladoceran population. Cladocerans are indicators of eutrophic nature of water as cladoceran density increase with increase in nutrient content (Shah and Pandit, 2013). Similarly, positive relation with temperature concurred with findings of Güntzel *et al.* (2010); Shukla *et al.* (2012) and Shah and Pandit (2013), however disagreement with the findings of Lingampally *et al.* (2018). Temperature is the key factor which could influence all other physico-chemical parameters of any aquatic ecosystem thereby could regulate the occurrence and abundance of cladoceran. The inverse correlation with TDS was concurred with observation of Sharma and Sharma (2009) and in disagreement with Lingampally *et al.* (2018).

The positive correlation with DO in floodplain lake was in concordance with the observation of Sharma and Sharma (2009) and Güntzel *et al.* (2010). However, negative correlation with DO in both DWR and oxbow lake was in agreement with findings of Rossa *et al.* (2001), Antunes *et al.* (2003) and Lingampally *et al.* (2018). The positive relation with  $\text{FCO}_2$  and SC in DWR was concurred with Bera *et al.* (2014) and Sharma and Sharma (2019). Positive relation with TH in both DWR and floodplain lake was in agreement with observation of Shukla *et al.* (2012). However, negative relation with TH in oxbow lake was similar with Sharma and Sharma (2009) and Tiwari *et al.* (2011). The negative relation with SC in both floodplain and oxbow lake was in agreement with findings of Green *et al.* (2005) and Güntzel *et al.* (2010).

Cladoceran density was negatively correlated with chloride in DWR and oxbow lake, while positively related in floodplain lake. Shukla *et al.* (2012) found positive correlation of cladoceran with chloride whereas Sharma and Sharma (2009) found negative correlation with chloride. Positive relation with pH in both floodplain lake and oxbow lake was concurred with findings of Shukla *et al.* (2012) and Bera *et al.* (2014). However negative relation with pH in DWR was in agreement with findings of Tiwari *et al.* (2011) and Sharma and Sharma (2019). Cladocerans are sensitive to acidification and highly responsive to changes in pH (Zawisza *et al.*, 2016). Inverse relation of cladoceran with  $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$  in DWR was concurred with Bera *et al.* (2014), which might be due to uptake of dissolved phosphate by phytoplankton and aquatic weeds in submerged condition. The cladoceran community dynamic in floodplain wetland was influenced by the multiple abiotic factors as the cladocerans are highly sensitive to the water quality of aquatic ecosystem (Milan *et al.*, 2017).

### Conclusion

The regulation of community dynamics of cladoceran by the various physico-chemical factors related to the ecosystem variability. Spatial variation has great influence on temporal variation of water quality of any aquatic bodies, thus in the present study it was observed that some of the influential parameters in one ecosystem become less influential in other ecosystem. The parameters especially the air temperature, water temperature, total alkalinity, nitrate nitrogen and total dissolved solids has potential effect on occurrence and abundance of cladoceran despite of ecosystem variability. Apart from the dissolved oxygen, biological oxygen demand, pH, phosphate phosphorus, total hardness and salinity also has significant effect on cladoceran dynamic.

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