

MANGROVE SUCCESSION AND MUD LOBSTER MOUNDS IN RANONG, THAILAND**Sonjai Havanond¹, Sanit Aksornkoae², Takehisa Nakamura³***¹Forest Research Office, Royal Forestry Office, Bangkok 10900, Thailand**²Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University, Bangkok 10900, Thailand**³Faculty of Agriculture, Tokyo University of Agriculture, Tokyo, Japan***ABSTRACT**

Mud lobsters build mounds of highly acid soils which are inhabited by large crab species and dense ground flora, in conditions unsuitable for growth of many mangrove species. The impact of the mud lobster on regenerating mangrove trees is not yet clear. This study is aimed, therefore, to obtain information on the distribution of mounds, soil characteristics and mangrove regeneration, at and around the mounds in disturbed and undisturbed sites. The investigation was carried out in the mangrove forest near Ranong on the west coast of Southern Thailand. Two quadrats were established in undisturbed and disturbed mangrove areas. Results show that regeneration was poor at both sites; *Heritiera Jomes* was the dominant regeneration species. Mounds in disturbed areas were significantly larger than in undisturbed areas, and occupied nearly double the percentage of total quadrat area (23.3% compared to 11.8%). Mounds were higher in the undisturbed site. Soils were found to be highly acidic on top of mud lobster mounds, and inhabited by large grapsid crab species and dense ground flora. The results are important as they show that mud lobsters mounds cover a greater area in disturbed areas and therefore create larger areas which are possibly unsuitable for mangrove tree growth. Future study will expand the number of quadrats examined and ensure that testable measurements of regeneration rates, soil condition, fauna and ground flora density are made. This approach should provide more power in determining if mound building by mud lobsters affects natural regeneration of mangrove tree species.