Habitat preference, food and feeding habits of five endemic fresh water fish species in two river basins in Sri Lanka

RRAR Shirantha, US Amarasinghe, MJS Wijeyaratne
Department of Zoology, University of Kelaniya

ABSTRACT

The nature of the habitats, food and feeding habits of five endemic fresh water fish species namely Belontia signata, Puntius cumingii, Puntius titteya, Puntius nigrofasciatus and Rosbora vaterifloris inhabiting the Kalu and Kelani river basins were studied from October 1998 to September 1999. Samplings were carried out in fifteen sampling stations in each of the two river basins. Puntius titteya and Belontia signata were found mainly in heavily shaded, shallow streams with slow following water and leaf debris while Puntius nigrofasciatus and Puntius cumingii were abundant in clear, cool streams where the margins were densely covered with submerged aquatic vegetation. Rosbora vaterifloris which was found only in the Kalu river basin, was abundant in shallow, cool, clear and heavily shaded forest streams with slow flowing water. Puntius titteya and Rosbora vaterifloris were found to feed mainly on aquatic insects and crustaceans while Puntius cumingii and Belontia signata were found to feed mainly on filamentous algae crustaceans and aquatic insects. Puntius nigrofasciatus feeds mainly on filamentous algae and aquatic macrophytes. These diverse feeding habits enable these species to co-exist in the same habitat with least overlap in their niches.

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