

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

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ABSTRACT

The nature of the habitats, food and feeding habits of five endemic fresh water fish species namely *Belontia signata*, *Puntius cuningii*, *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 cuningii* 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 cuningii* 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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