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FOOD RESOURCE PARTITIONING AMONG SIX ENDEMIC FRESHWATER FISH SPECIES INHABITING THE KALU AND KELANI RIVER BASINS OF SRI LANKA

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The food selectivity and food resources partitioning among six endemic freshwater fish species namely, *Belontia signata*, *Garra ceylonensis*, *Puntius cumingii*, *Puntius titteya*, *Puntius nigrofasciatus* and *Rasbora vaterifloris* in the Kalu and Kelani river basins were studied from October 1998 to September 2000. Studies were carried out in 15 sampling sites in each river basin at monthly intervals. *Puntius nigrofasciatus* showed a moderate dietary overlap with *Puntius cumingii* and a low dietary overlap with other co-occurring species. *Rasbora vaterifloris* a carnivorous fish species, showed moderate dietary overlap with *Garra ceylonensis* and a low dietary overlap with other co-occurring species. A moderate dietary overlap was observed among *Belontia signata*, *Puntius titteya* and *Garra ceylonensis*.

Food electivity values of *Puntius titteya* and *Belontia signata* indicates that they are highly selective for diatoms, aquatic insects and rotifers and non selective for green algae and aquatic macrophytes. *Puntius cumingii* was found to be highly selective for diatoms and non selective for aquatic insects and filamentous algae. *Puntius nigrofasciatus* was found to be selective for diatoms and aquatic macrophytes and nonselective for green algae. *Rasbora vaterifloris* and *Garra ceylonensis* were selective for aquatic insects and crustaceans and nonselective for diatoms, rotifers and detritus.

The results indicate that these species can co-exist in the same habitat with very little interspecific competition due to low and moderate overlap in the diet and different selectivity for different food items.

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