



Feeding Habits of an Endemic Bagrid Catfish, *Mystus oculatus* from Western Ghats of India

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Abstract: The diet composition and feeding ecology of a bagrid freshwater cat fish, *Mystus oculatus*, endemic to the Western Ghats region of South India was studied from October 2018 to September 2019. The gut contents of 363 specimens with a total length ranging from 56 to 129 mm were collected from Chalakudy river of Kerala. The mean relative length of gut (RLG) recorded was 0.32. Lowest feeding intensity and GaSI was noticed during the breeding season while highest feeding activity during pre-spawning months. Index of relative importance showed that crustaceans (37.97%) were the most preferred food item in the gut followed by insects (13.97%), fish body parts and scales (11.77%) and rotifers (10.6%). The results of the gut content analysis revealed that the species exhibits a carnivorous and euryphagous feeding habit. The present investigation provides a clear idea about the role of this endemic species in the Chalakudy river food web.

Keywords: *Mystus oculatus*, Bagrid cat fish, Feeding ecology, Carnivorous
