

FOOD AND FEEDING OF *LABEO DUSSUMIERI*

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Labeo dussumieri (Volenciennes), is an indigenous fresh water fish, which inhabits large river systems and tanks of the lowlands of Sri Lanka.

This riverine carp, like many other flood plain fishes (Lowe, McConnel, 1975), is observed to migrate into the "villus" (flood plain) to breed, during the seasonal floods.

Gut contents of fish ranging from 8.3 cm to 38.1 cm in total length, collected from various centres along the Mahaweli Ganga system, were examined.

This bottom feeder has a ventrally situated suctorial mouth, with two horny cutting edges immediately inside the lips, adapted for browsing. It has a long thin walled gut ranging from 78.4 cm to 118 cm in fish ranging from 45 cm - 10 cm of total length respectively.

The relative gut length generally increases from 8.5 to 17.4 with increase in the size of the fish.

L. dussumieri was found to be a pure herbivore feeding on Macrophytes, Green algae, Blue green algae and diatoms, of which Macrophytes and green algae predominated. Among the 15 genera of green algae fed upon by *L. dussumieri*, *Chlorella* and *Cladophora* predominated. Of the 16 genera of Blue-green algae, *Oscillatoria* and *Merismopedia* were the major food items, whilst among 19 genera of diatoms consumed, *Hantzehita* was present in large numbers.

Although a large number of algae enter into the diet of the fish, all of them were not utilised.

When the variation in the feeding habits with the size of the fish was analysed by placing the fish ranging from 8.3 cm to 38.1 cm, in 6 cm length classes, no appreciable difference in the food was found.

Reference:

1. Lowe - McConnell, R. H. (1975) 'Fish Communities in Tropical Freshwaters' London and New York: Longman. 337 p.