

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FOOD AND FEEDING OF *SIGANUS LINEATUS*

K. Chitravadivelu and A. Sivapalan

(Depts. of Zoology and Botany, University of Jaffna)

Siganus lineatus (Cuvier and Valenciennes) is a moderate sized fish which inhabits coastal areas and brackish water bodies in Sri Lanka. This is found in the tropical parts of the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Stomach contents of fish ranging from 2.4 cm to 25.5 cm in standard length, collected from various places along the Northern coasts, Thondaimannar and Jaffna lagoons were examined.

S. lineatus frequents coral reefs and rocky localities, feeding in shoals. It has a small terminal mouth with a single row of close-set incisor-like teeth, on each jaw and feeds by scraping algae from rocks and corals and browsing on sea weeds.

Analysis of stomach contents revealed that *S. lineatus* is purely a herbivore feeding on 12 genera of diatoms, 4 genera of blue-green algae, 6 genera of green algae, 9 genera of red algae, a brown algae, *Dictyota* and an angiosperm *Thalassia*, of which the diatoms predominated. The major components were *Licmophora*, *Gomphonema* and *Navicula* (diatoms), *Oscillatoria* (blue greens), *Cladophora* and *Chaetomorpha* (greens) and *Gracilaria* and *Laurencia* (reds). *Thalassia* predominated over all the other genera except the diatoms.

When the variation in the feeding habits with the size of the fish was analysed by placing the fish in 3 cm length classes, no significant difference in the food was found.

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