

PERIODICITY IN THE OCCURRENCE OF THE EDIBLE SEA CRAB
PORTUNUS PELAGICUS LINN. IN THE
 SEA GRASSES OF THE NEGOMBO LAGOON

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Mangroves and seagrass beds are considered to be the nursery grounds of some marine crabs. The adults of the blue sea crab, *Portunus pelagicus* has a wide distribution in the seas from Australia to South Africa and Red Sea to Japan (Boone, 1934).

The juveniles of this species occurred in the seagrasses of the Negombo Lagoon from March to May, when the rainfall was low, and temperature and salinity were high. The crab density was higher in the seagrasses than the mangroves. During the 3 months they occurred in the seagrasses, their density in the upper lagoon remained nearly at 0.1 m^{-2} while in the lower lagoon it reached a peak of 1.07 m^{-2} . The carapace width at the longest spines ranged from 0.7 cm to 7.4 cm in the seagrasses. 98% of the juveniles were males. The periodicity in their occurrence in the seagrasses is a sharp contrast to the aseasonality of the other edible sympatric green crab, *Scylla serrata* (Macintosh 1982).

References

- Boone, L. 1934. Scientific results of the world cruise of the yacht Alva, 1931. Crustacea: Stomatopoda and Brachyura. Bull. Vanderbilt Marine Museum, 5 : 63-67
- Macintosh, D.J. 1982. Fisheries and aquaculture significance of mangrove swamps, with special reference to the Indo-West-Pacific region. Recent Advances in Aquaculture, Croom Helm, London:5-65

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