

**B-06: indigenous fish species co-occurring with the low risk
(1996 IUCN'S red list) species *Puntius nigrofasciatus***

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Out of the 69 fish species indigenous to Sri Lanka, 16 are *Barbus* species. Most of the *Barbus* species are of small size and usually do not exceed 10cm. They inhabit a variety of both lotic and lentic habitats.

Many of the endemic species are small in size and are in danger of extinction because of changes in their habitat brought about by man's direct or indirect interference and also due to rapid depletion especially for the aquarium trade. To increase the indigenous fish population in natural habitats, there is a need to study the behaviour of these species. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the indigenous fish species co-occurring with the endangered indigenous species *Puntius nigrofasciatus*.

The natural habitat of *Puntius nigrofasciatus* was studied in a stream of the river Mahaweli at Ginigathena. These species were present mostly among the submerged aquatic macrophytes. *Puntius nigrofasciatus* were observed mainly in areas of slow flow. The sampling sites were about 2-3 m wide with stony/sandy substratum and the depth was 0.4-1.0 m.

The indigenous fish species co-occurring with the species *Puntius nigrofasciatus* were *Puntius ticto*, *Puntius cuningii*, *Puntius tittaya*, *Lepidocephalichthys thermalis* and *Apolochilus parvus*. The percentage occurrence of *Puntius nigrofasciatus* was the highest. Among the co-occurring species *Lepidocephalichthys thermalis* was the largest species.

Puntius nigrofaciatus, *Puntius ticto*, *Puntius cumingii* and *Puntius titeya* preferred to dwell in the middle layer. *Apolocheilus parvus* is a top dweller and *Lepidocephalichthys thermalis* is a bottom dweller.

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