On the Importance of *Mesopodopsis Zeylanica* (Crustacea, Mysidacea) as Food of Fish

Smith (1879), Tattersall & Tattersall (1951), Stevenson (1958) and Hopkins (1965) have stressed the importance of mysids as food of many marine fishes. Of the estuarine species, *Neomysis awatschensis* is the most extensively studied species. Heubach *et al.* (1963) have shown that it forms an important food of one year old stripped bass *(Roccus sexatilies)* over 2.5 cm in length. From India there is no detailed report regarding the part played by mysids in the food of fishes. Kaliamoorthy (1972) found that *Mesopodopsis orientalis* as an important food of fishes. Devraj *et al.* (1975) reported the presence of mysids in the stomach of pearl spot *(Etroplus suratensis)*, but they have not identified the species.

The present investigation was aimed at ascertaining the actual consumers of *Mesopodopsis zeylanica,* to assess its importance in the trophic relationship within the habitat.

Random collection of fishes from Veli lake (08 26′ Lat. N and 76 57′ Long E) was made and their gut contents examined. It was observed (Table 1) that none of the fishes except *Etroplus suratensis* had mysids in their stomach. Further no mysids were found in fishes above 5 cm length. Small fishes measuring 2.5 cm contained 12–27 mysids. Apart from mysids, there were also a good number of copepods. These fishes were observed following swarms of mysids. The stomach of *E. suratensis* was full of *M. zelanica* during February and March, 1973 when a peak in the abundance of this mysid occurred.

This indicated that *M. zeylanica* formed a preferred item in the food of *Etroplus,* particularly juveniles, ranging from 2 to 5 cm. Those above 5 cm showed no preference probably because they fed on larger organisms. The itensity of feeding was observed to be

Table 1. *Gut contents of different fishes*

Fish	No.	Range in total length mm	Gut contents
Mugil cephalus	27	48–361	Diatoms, algae and decayed organic matter
Chanos chanos	14	39–312	Diatoms, blue green algae, filamentous algae and decayed vegetable matter
Channa striatus	19	61–407	Remains of fish, fish fry, insect larvae and mud
Clarius batrachus	23	42–296	Small fish, worms and insects
Glossogobius giures	12	17–128	Hydrilla, filamentous algae, ostracods and insect remains
Arius sp.	8	51–281	Detritus, vegetable matter and remains of small crustaceans
Barbus sp.	31	23–198	Detritus, insect larvae, copepods and mud
Lates calcarifer	6	118–403	Small fishes, prawns and remains of crabs
Etroplus suratensis	58	18–156	Diatoms, filamentous algae, water fleas, mysids and copepods
Etroplus maculatus	32	11– 48	Diatoms and unicellular algae

directly proportional to their abundance in the habitat. This suggests the importance of this mysid in fish culture. If artificial manuring is resorted to, this continuous breeder can be made available in large numbers throughout the year.

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