

Nesting materials of indigenous cichlids in Batticaloa lagoon, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Etroplus suratensis and *E. maculatus* are indigenous cichlids found in Sri Lanka. The two *Etroplus* species are sympatric and show segregation of habitat. The aim of this study was to investigate the nesting materials used by the by the two *Etroplus* spp., for which quantitative data were collected during a period of one year from an inlet of the Batticaloa Lagoon, Sri Lanka.

Data revealed that There was variation in the frequency of nesting material used by *E. maculatus* ($G = 88.55$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.0001$). *Excoecaria* pole, Coconut fallen and Coconut were used significantly more as nesting material by *E. maculatus*. There was no significant difference among these four nesting materials ($df=3$, $p=0.347$). There was no significant difference when the above nesting materials were excluded in the G test ($G=16.44$, $df=8$, $p=0.06$).

The nesting materials of *E. maculatus* can be categorized into three types: mangrove materials, coconut materials and others. Nesting materials of *E. suratensis* can be classified into the four types: mangroves materials, coconut materials, other plant materials and others. Coconut materials were the highest (45.34%) followed by mangroves materials (39.13%). Other plant material were 10.55% and others consisted of carapace of crab, brick and polythene bag comprised of 4.96% of total nesting materials.

The results of the above study reiterate the fact that mangroves are essential for the existence of *Etroplus* species since they are very important to the cichlids to nest.

Keywords

nest building, litterfall, suitable substrate