



RESEARCH ARTICLE.....

Food and feeding habits of marine catfish, *Osteogeneiosus militaris* (Linn., 1758) off Mumbai waters

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ABSTRACT..... The food and feeding habits of the marine cat fish, *Osteogeneiosus militaris* (Linn., 1758) off Mumbai waters was studied. The species was found to be carnivorous and predacious in feeding habit. Index of preponderance values indicated that, it feeds mainly on crustaceans (shrimps, crabs), molluscs (bivalves, squids) and small fishes (*Coilia* spp., ribbon fish). Among the food groups, crustaceans dominate throughout the year in comparison to molluscs and fishes. In the crustacean group, *Acetes* spp. was found to be the dominant food item contributing to 43.34 per cent followed by penaeid shrimps, which shared 27.65 per cent of the total food in all the months. Analysis of month-wise percentage food composition revealed that, the species fed the highest percentage of *Acetes* spp. during the month of November (34.92%) while penaeid shrimps was consumed in the largest percentage in January (35.10%). With respect to the size (length) of the fish, the percentage of *Acetes* spp. as a food item was highest (52.99%) for the length group of 391-420 mm and lowest (25.64%) for 361-390 mm. The guts were found to be empty for fishes having length of more than 420 mm. Results of the feeding intensity delineated that, the species is not a voracious feeder as none of the individuals studied was found to have gorged or full stomach over the entire period of investigation. Among the different length groups, the highest feeding fishes were in the length group of 211-240 mm. Gastro-somatic index was highest during August for males and during November for females while the pooled value was highest in January (3.206).

KEY WORDS..... Food and feeding habits, marine catfish, *Osteogeneiosus militaris*

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