

Short Notes on Fisheries of Nanga Merit Area, Kapit, Sarawak

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to provide additional information regarding fisheries in Sarawak especially in Nanga Merit Area. Fish samplings were carried out at nine selected stations along Batang Rajang, Merit River and their tributaries. A total of 106 individuals were caught during the six day sampling period (17 – 23 June 2009), comprising 15 species belonging to 11 genera and five families. Fish from the family Cyprinidae was the most commonly caught. The low number of individuals obtained during this study was most probably due to the effects of poisons (commercial pesticides and tuba sap) and the low water level during dry season. Fishing activities by the local community are categorized as subsistence fishing. Currently, pressures from the fishing activities of the local communities can be considered minimal but the introduction of illegal fishing methods may lead to the disappearance of some species in the future.

Keywords: fisheries, Cyprinidae, pesticide, tuba sap, Sarawak

Introduction

Sarawak has many river systems that support diverse population of freshwater fish fauna. Atack (2006) stated that there are 256 species of freshwater fishes identified from Sarawak. In addition, several studies on diversity, ecology and distribution of freshwater fish had been carried out by Khairul *et al.* (2009); Jefferine *et al.* (2009); Sipin (2004), Atack (2006) and Nyanti *et al.* (1999). Although these studies have shed some lights regarding the freshwater fish composition in Sarawak, none of this was carried out in Nanga Merit area.

Freshwater fish play an important role for many rural communities in Sarawak as the main sources of protein. Nanga Merit, which covered an area of approximately 1,745 km² is located about 70 km from Kapit (RAKAN Sarawak, 2003). Nanga Merit can only be reached by river where express boat and barge transportations are available. It takes about two hours to reach Nanga Merit from Kapit town by express boat. However, if the barges are used, it might take more than three hours. This note serves as additional information of the fisheries in Sarawak particularly in Nanga Merit area, focusing on the fish assemblages and the overview of fisheries from local community perspectives.