

A Comparison of the Gut Contents of Two Cardinal Fish, *Fowleria vaiulae* (Jordan & Seale 1906) and *Fowleria variegata* (Valenciennes 1832) in Seagrass Beds of

Palompon, Leyte

A Special Problem

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ABSTRACT

Seagrass ecosystems support much of the Philippines' coastal marine resources with the presence of a rich diversity of species, including the economically important ones. Understanding the diet composition of fishes through gut content analysis is essential for selecting species for aquaculture. Specimens of *Fowleria vaiulae* and *Fowleria variegata* were obtained through a trawl survey in the seagrass beds of Palompon, Leyte from November 2011 to February 2012. A total of 291 guts were analysed in this study. Results showed diet composition of both species is mostly made up of benthic invertebrates. A high percentage of chyme was observed in both species (46-65%), suggesting the consumption of easily digested materials. Also for both *Fowleria* species, it was observed that smaller size classes consume a higher number of small preys while larger size classes feed on larger preys. Small invertebrates such as tanaids and amphipods were more abundant in the guts of *F. vaiulae* and large preys of shrimps and crabs dominate the diet of *F. variegata*. This difference may be due to food partitioning in co-occurring species to avoid competition.