

# Pelagic Small Fishes in Peat Swamp of Jeruju River, South Sumatra, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Jeruju River in Sumatra of Indonesia is one important remaining peat swamp area in South Sumatra Province. A study to looking at fish diversity and abundance of pelagic small fishes in Jeruju River was conducted on 28 to 30 August 2020. There are six species of pelagic small fishes recorded caught using hand lift net 1x1 m<sup>2</sup>, including *Brevibora cheeya*, *Desmopuntius gemellus*, *Oxygaster anomalura*, *Pectenocypris micromysticetus*, *Rasbora einthovenii* and *Trigonopoma* sp. The species range from 19-45 mm in total length. *Pectenocypris micromysticetus* is most abundance fish species (up to 80%), following *Brevibora cheeya* (17%), *Desmopuntius gemellus* (0,32%), *Oxygaster anomalura* (0,63%), *Rasbora einthovenii* (0,40%) and *Trigonopoma* sp (0,24%).

**Key words:** Cyprinidae, Freshwater, Peat swamp, Sumatra, Indonesia

### Introduction

Wetlands are transitional between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems when the water level is regularly near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water (Kanaujia and Kumar, 2014). Wetlands in which considerable amounts of water are retained by an accumulation of partially decayed organic matter are peat swamps (Smith, 1996). Tropical peat swamps have been known to contribute ecosystem's significance as a global carbon store, but its biodiversity information remains poorly understood (Posa *et al.*, 2011).

The peat swamp in Indonesia and Southeast Asia

are often recognized as having unique biodiversity, while these nutrient-poor wetlands are indeed unique and include a distinct fauna (particularly fish) (Giesen *et al.*, 2018). The fish fauna and environmental information are needed for the assessment of fish biodiversity and population, because many local people depend on fishing for their livelihoods (Thornton *et al.*, 2018). This ecosystem supports many endemic freshwater fish species, but **if current rates of conversion to a predominantly agricultural mosaic landscape continue through 2050, 16 fish species may become globally extinct** (Giam *et al.*, 2012).

In Indonesia, more than half of peat swamps in

South Sumatra Province have been reduced to landscapes covered by shrubs, secondary growth and ferns, thereby, this province alone constitutes 65% of the whole extent of the lang coper types in Sumatra (Miettinen and Liew, 2010). Jeruju River in South Sumatra Province is one peat swamp where local communities depend on fishery resources and seasonal rice field production (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2017). In this paper, we report fish diversity and abundance of pelagic small fishes in the peat swamp of the Jeruju River, to give evidence of how important peat swamps for certain freshwater fish species and populations.

### Materials and Methods

This study was conducted at Jeruju River (03°33'12''S, 105°37'06''E). Jeruju River is administratively located at Jeruju Village, Cengal Subdistrict, Ogan Komerling Ilir District, South Sumatra Province (Figure 1). The Jeruju village is located at the edge of the Jeruju River, and c. 15 km inland (Figure 2). The habitat is a peat swamp area, with 4 pH. We visit Jeruju Village on 28-30 August 2020, coincidentally during the dry season in Sumatra. This area can be accessed by car from Palembang (the capital city of South Sumatra Province) or Kayu Agung (the capital city of Ogan Komerling Ilir). The Jeruju Village is one village facilitated by Peat Restoration Agency or Badan Restorasi Gambut, for a community development program to improve local people livelihoods (Badan Restorasi Gambut 2018). As a peat swamp area, vegetation in this area is dominated by *Meulaleuca* sp, *Hymenachine amplexicaulis*



Fig. 2. Jeruju River with vegetation and house of local people on 30 August 2020.

and *Pandanus* sp.

To looking at fish diversity and the abundance of pelagic small fishes in Jeruju River, We caught fish using a hand lift net 1x1 m<sup>2</sup>, traditional fishing gear locally called "tangkul". The fishes were caught in ten times repetition on every one minute in a station. The fishes are identified with western Indonesia and South Sumatran freshwater fish guides (Kottelat *et al.*, 1993; Iqbal, 2011; Iqbal *et al.*, 2018; Iqbal *et al.*, 2020). The number of species, range of total length and number of individuals collected of each species are presented in Table 1.

### Results

There are six species of small fishes range from 19 to



Fig. 1. The location of Jeruju River, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Yellow square show location where sample collected by researchers.

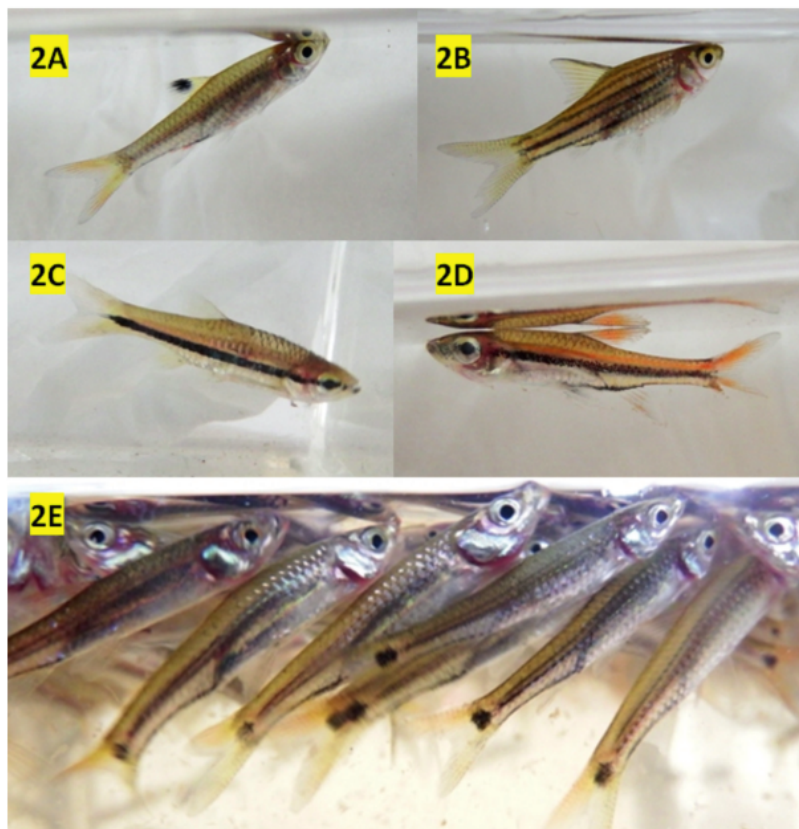
**Table 1.** Checklist and number of small pelagic fishes in Jeruju River caught by using handlift net (1x1 m<sup>2</sup>).

No.	Fish Species	Total Length (mm)	Caught Repeation Using Hand Lift Net									Total	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10
1	<i>Brevibora cheeya</i>	23-33	36	30	40	50	132	33	23	59	16	33	452
2	<i>Desmopuntius gemellus</i>	37-45	0	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	8
3	<i>Oxygaster anomalura</i>	33-42	0	5	2	4	0	2	0	3	0	0	16
4	<i>Pectenocypris micromysticetus</i>	19-32	438	371	224	41	188	164	219	274	47	105	2071
5	<i>Rasbora einthovenii</i>	27-30	0	0	0	0	8	0	2	0	0	0	10
6	<i>Trigonopoma sp</i>	22-28	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	6
	<b>Total</b>		<b>474</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>2563</b>

45 mm caught using hand lift net, *Brevibora cheeya*, *Desmopuntius gemellus*, *Oxygaster anomalura*, *Pectenocypris micromysticetus*, *Rasbora einthovenii* and *Trigonopoma sp* (Figure 3). A total of 2.563 individuals of small fishes caught using hand lift net 1x1 m<sup>2</sup> in Jeruju River indicate small fishes in this area are very abundant. Based on the number of small fishes

caught, *Pectenocypris micromysticetus* is one most abundant fish species (up to 80%), following *Brevibora cheeya* (17%), *Desmopuntius gemellus* (0.32%), *Oxygaster anomalura* (0.63%), *Rasbora einthovenii* (0.40%) and *Trigonopoma sp* (0.24%).

### Discussion



**Fig. 3.** Small fishes found during visit to Jeruju Village, Sumatra, Indonesia. (A) *Brevibora cheeya*; (B) *Desmopuntius gemellus*; (C) *Rasbora einthovenii*; (D) *Trigonopoma sp*; (E) *Pectenocypris micromysticetus* (All photos taken by Muhammad Iqbal).

Six species of small pelagic fishes were recorded at the peat swamp of Jeruju River. The number of fish diversity in a peat swamp in Indonesia and Southeast Asia is around 41 to 73 species (Iqbal and Setijono, 2011; Ismail *et al.*, 2015; Muchlisin *et al.*, 2017; Thornton *et al.*, 2018). Although few studies of fish diversity in peat swamp areas have been reported, the study on small pelagic fishes in peat swamp is still little known. Pelagic fishes are fishes that associate exclusively with the open water on the upper section of the water (Cushing *et al.*, 2019). Pelagic fishes are most harvested fishes for human consumption encompass a diverse variety of animals, and they range from small, densely schooling, to large, top-level carnivores (Tyedmers, 2004). Small pelagic fishes offer large and underrecognized opportunities to boost food and nutrients security, generally processed, sold and eaten whole (Kolding *et al.*, 2019). In Indonesia, small pelagic fishes are sources of food, the most widely consumed by people, given the existence, of a fairly abundant species, and are found in almost entire territorial waters of this country (Anna, 2018).

All of the small pelagic fishes caught in the Jeruju River are members of the family Cyprinidae. Cyprinidae is the largest group of freshwater fishes worldwide (Winfield and Nelson, 1991), and also in the peat swamp areas of Indonesia, eg. Rawa Tripa and Merang Kepayang (Iqbal, 2011; Muchlisin *et al.*, 2017). The finding of Cyprinidae as a single dominated group of small pelagic fishes suggests the importance of Cyprinidae as aquatic fauna in the peat swamp of Jeruju River. Visit Jeruju River is a coincidence during the dry season in Sumatra. In the flood plain of Ogan Komering wetlands of South Sumatra Province, where the water level recedes, the fish become concentrated and attract many fish-eating animals, particularly birds (Verheugt *et al.*, 1993).

Record of total of 2.563 individuals of small pelagic fishes within ten minutes suggests how the abundance of small pelagic fishes in Jeruju River. The most abundant species is *Pectenocypris micromysticetus* with a total number of 2.071 individuals or 80% of the total proportion. This species is Sumatran endemic freshwater fish that a relatively described as new species for science (Tan and Kottelat, 2009). The second most abundant is *Brevibora cheeya* with a total number of 452 individuals (17%). Similar to *Pectenocypris micromysticetus*, *Brevibora cheeya* is also a new species described for science in 2011 (Liao and Tan, 2011). In zooge-

graphic freshwater fish concern, the significant number of *Pectenocypris micromysticetus* and *Brevibora cheeya* suggest the importance of Jeruju River as a habitat of Sumatran endemic and restricted freshwater species.

This study has successfully documented to looking at species diversity and abundance of pelagic small fishes of peat swamp in Jeruju River of South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Further study and monitoring of pelagic small fishes in peat swamp of Jeruju River and other parts of Indonesia are urgently needed, particularly the fishes become important sources food of local people and continuous of loss of peat swamps elsewhere in Indonesia.

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