

**ECOLOGIA ALIMENTAR E RELAÇÕES
TRÓFICAS DE NOVE ESPÉCIES DE
PEIXES DEMERSAIS DOS AÇORES**

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RESUMO

Os hábitos alimentares de nove espécies de peixes demersais dos Açores, com interesse comercial (cação, *Galeorhinus galeus*; raia-lenga, *Raja clavata*; congro, *Conger conger*; abrótea, *Phycis phycis*; imperador, *Beryx decadactylus*; alfonsim, *B. splendens*; besugo, *Pagellus acarne*; goraz, *Pagellus bogaraveo* e peixe-espada, *Lepidopus caudatus*) foram estudados no âmbito de um vasto programa científico, direccionado para o estudo da pescaria demersal dos Açores. Foram amostrados 9745 peixes abordo do N/I "Arquipélago" (Fig. 10), capturados com palangre de fundo, durante a Primavera de 1996 e 1997. Os conteúdos estomacais foram analisados por forma a descrever os hábitos alimentares de cada espécie, as diferenças nas dietas relacionadas com a área de captura, a variação dos padrões de alimentação com o crescimento e sexo dos indivíduos, e o estudo das interações específicas. A análise das dietas revelam a existência de quatro grupos de espécies com hábitos alimentares semelhantes. O cação, o peixe-espada e o congro, formam o primeiro grupo com hábitos alimentares semelhantes. Este grupo é constituído por predadores piscívoros bentopelágicos, considerados os predadores de topo na comunidade demersal dos Açores. O segundo grupo é constituído pela raia-lenga e pela abrótea. A dieta destes predadores é constituída por crustáceos decápodes bentónicos, peixes bentopelágicos e algum zooplâncton. Parece claro, que estas espécies têm um comportamento alimentar associado ao fundo, mas que possuem a habilidade de se alimentar, também, na coluna de água. Um factor que poderá contribuir para o elevado grau de associação destas espécies, é o facto de ambas possuírem um comportamento alimentar marcadamente nocturno, o que condiciona o tipo de presas disponíveis. Por outro lado, e como a morfologia destas duas espécies é bastante distinta, parece que a utilização do mesmo habitat é, também, um factor predominante nesta associação. O terceiro grupo é caracterizado por espécies que se alimentam de organismos invertebrados, principalmente na coluna de água, e é constituído pelo imperador e pelo alfonsim. Estas espécies alimentam-se de crustáceos decápodes pelágicos e bentopelágicos, outros invertebrados pelágicos, de zooplâncton pelágico, e de alguns peixes mesopelágicos. Este grupo é caracterizado por predadores generalistas que parecem efectuar migrações verticais relacionadas com a alimentação. O último grupo é caracterizado por espécies que com hábitos alimentares semelhantes ao do grupo anterior. Contudo, parecem predar principalmente junto ao fundo e secundariamente na coluna de água. O quarto grupo é formado pelo goraz e o besugo, que se alimentam de invertebrados bentónicos (excluindo os crustáceos), peixes bentopelágicos, mas também alguns invertebrados pelágicos e peixes mesopelágicos. A diversidade da dieta deste grupo é ligeiramente mais baixa do que a do grupo anterior, fazendo prever a existência de alguma especialização para algum tipo de presas. Contudo, não foi possível testar esta hipótese. As hipóteses de existência de competição entre as espécies, e se o alimento é ou não um factor limitante, não pode ser testada com os dados apresentados neste trabalho. Contudo, pode-se concluir que a predação inter-específica não parece ser significativa.

ÍNDICE

INTRODUÇÃO	1
SINOPSE E RESUMO DO ESTADO DO CONHECIMENTO PARA AS ESPÉCIES EM ESTUDO	5
MATERIAL E MÉTODOS	15
Amostragem de campo	15
Procedimento laboratorial e identificação dos conteúdos estomacais	16
ANÁLISE DOS DADOS	19
Caracterização dos hábitos alimentares	18
Variações relacionadas com o sexo	19
Variações ontogenéticas	20
Variações espaciais	20
Análise estatística	20
Interacções específicas	21
Níveis tróficos	21
RESULTADOS	23
Resultados gerais	23
Cação (<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>)	25
Raia-lenga (<i>Raja clavata</i>)	29
Congro (<i>Conger conger</i>)	37
Abrótea (<i>Phycis phycis</i>)	41
Imperador (<i>Beryx decadactylus</i>)	49
Aifonsim (<i>Beryx splendens</i>)	55
Besugo (<i>Pagellus acarne</i>)	66
Goraz (<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>)	70
Peixe-espada-branco (<i>Lepidopus caudatus</i>)	77
Interacções específicas	81
DISCUSSÃO	85
BIBLIOGRAFIA	105
ANEXOS	119

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