

Hemibrycon taeniurus (Mountain Stream Sardine)

Family: Characidae (Characins)

Order: Characiformes (Characins and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Mountain stream sardine, *Hemibrycon taeniurus*.

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1679-62252010000400005&script=sci_arttext, downloaded 20 April 2015]

TRAITS. The mountain stream sardine is a species of fish that is distinguished by several characteristics (Armi, 2015). The number of branched anal fin rays, of which there are 25-29 is one of these characteristics as other fishes belonging to the same genus have around 15-24. Another unique characteristic of the mountain stream sardine is the number of vertebrae. Compared to the normal 41-43 vertebrae, the mountain stream sardine typically has 39-41 (Armi, 2015). This species also typically has eight scale rows above the lateral line whilst other species have six or seven. The number of lateral line scales range between 40-42, and it has 10-15 scales along the anal-fin base scale sheath. Males grow up to 6.5cm in length and have no bony hooks on their caudal fin (tail) rays. They also have silvery coloured scales. Females grow larger than the males, maxing out at approximately 8.2cm, and have orange coloured scales (Bertaco, 2010). Also absent in this species of fish is a black spot that covers the base of the caudal fin rays (Armi, 2015). They also have 16 caudal peduncle scales, 15-19 predorsal scales, and no pigment, or colouring, just above and just below the distal middle caudal fin rays (Armi, 2015).

DISTRIBUTION. The mountain stream sardine is typically found in the freshwater bodies of Central America and is in high abundance in western Trinidad (EOL, 2015).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. This species of fish is found in rivers and streams (Armi, 2015) along with many other species of similar-sized fish species, such as the silver hatchet fish, the “pui pui” and the silver dollar tetra (Kenny, 2008). They are especially found in pools at the bases of waterfalls (EOL, 2015).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The mountain stream sardine is a benthopelagic species, which means that it typically lives at the bottom of the body of the body of water it's in and feeds at the bottom, close to the surface or at midwater level (Armi, 2015). They also feed on insects and mosquito larvae, which are generally on or close to the water's surface (EOL, 2015).

POPULATION ECOLOGY. This species typically gathers in large groups, forming schools, in pools at the bases of waterfalls and is very abundant in the areas that they are found (EOL, 2015). This school formation aids in not only the avoidance of predators, since the high numbers would aid in predator detection and also would confuse the predators and decrease individual captures/deaths, but also reduces the stresses of finding foraging areas and finding mates (O'Callaghan, 2011).

REPRODUCTION. There is little published information on this species' reproductive and life cycles. It has a short life cycle of approximately two years (EOL, 2015) and since they exist in groups, or schools, finding a mate is relatively easy (O'Callaghan, 2011).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The mountain stream sardine is a highly abundant species and is not endangered or under any type of protection (EOL, 2015).

REFERENCES

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