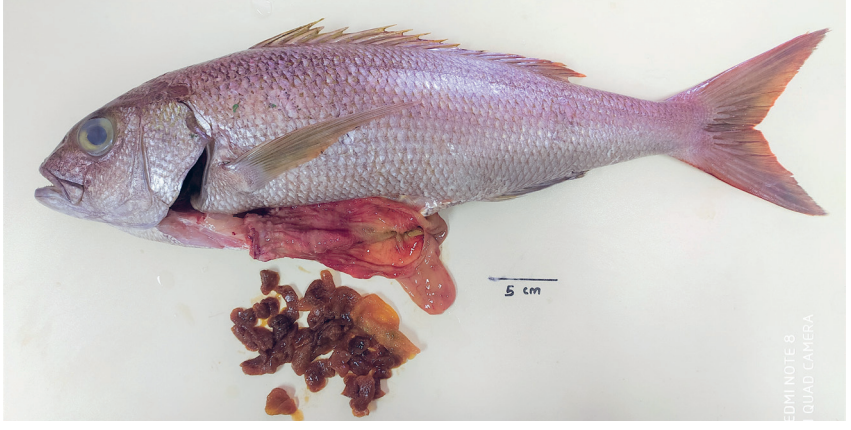
Ascidians from the gut of crimson jobfish



Teleost fishes and crustaceans such as shrimp and crabs usually form the major gut content of snappers. In September 2021, two specimens of crimson jobfish (*Pristipomoides filamentosus*) belonging to the family Lutjanidae were observed with entirely ascidians as diet in their fully gorged stomachs. The fish samples were collected from the Kalamukku fish landing centre in Kochi (09°59'924"'N, 76°14'564"'E), India and were caught by a hook and line operated at a depth range of 20–40 m off the Kochi coast, Kerala, India. They had a total length of 55.7 and 56 cm, and the weight of the gut content was 44 and 57.2 g, respectively. Ascidians are soft-bodied, marine invertebrate filter feeders inhabiting the coral reef areas.

There are meagre reports of ascidians forming the diets of deep-water snapper species from Indian waters. Besides these two fishes, 21 individuals of *P. filamentosus* were sampled for the feeding biology studies during the month in the size range of 23-38 cm TL and their gut content was dominated by teleost fishes, crabs and shrimp. It is significant to note that the ascidians were observed in the stomachs of fishes belonging to the largest size groups and that both the fishes were adults with mature gonads. Ontogenetic changes in reef fish diet indicate that the strategy will reduce intra-species competition (for food and habitat) between adults and juveniles. Studies on the gut content of a greater number of adult specimens are needed to further evaluate this.

Reported by Livi Wilson*, T. M. Najmudeen, K. T. S. Sunil, S. Pakkri Muthu and M. J. Joseph | ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi