

FEEDING ECOLOGY OF HYBRID STRIPED BASS
(*Morone saxatilis* x *M. chrysops*) IN CULTURE PONDS

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ABSTRACT

A study of the relative importance of food organisms utilized by hybrid striped bass (*Morone saxatilis* x *M. chrysops*) was conducted at the Dennis Wildlife Center in Bonneau, South Carolina. Objectives were to determine the food items of major importance and to document the availability, utilization and preference of zooplankton by one- to five-week-old hybrid striped bass.

We collected twenty-five plankton samples and 300 hybrids from each of five 0.2 ha culture ponds. The dominant taxa of net zooplankton in decreasing order of occurrence were *Bosmina*, *Daphnia* and Cyclopidae. Dominant genera of zooplankton in hybrid stomachs in decreasing order of occurrence were *Cyclops*, *Daphnia* and *Bosmina*. Selectivity indices calculated for the three most important taxa of zooplankton showed that hybrid striped bass preferentially selected *Cyclops* and *Daphnia* and avoided *Bosmina*. Insect larvae and ostracods were other food items found in many stomachs.

INTRODUCTION

Successful introductions of striped bass *Morone saxatilis* and hybrid striped bass x white bass (*M. chrysops*) to inland reservoirs throughout the southeastern and southwestern United States are largely the result of stocking fingerlings rather than larvae. Due partly to the success of fingerling releases, approximately 456 reservoirs in 36 states have been stocked with striped bass or their hybrids. More than 40 million fingerlings were stocked in 1981 alone (Stevens 1984).

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