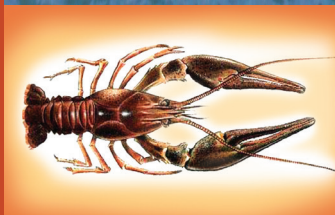


Nutritional Freshwater Life

Ramasamy Santhanam



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CONTENTS

Preface.....	xvii
About the Author	xix

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Plants and Animals in Freshwater Biomes.....	1
Malnutrition, a Global Problem.....	1
Importance of Freshwater Fisheries	2
Importance of Freshwater Fish	2
Protein Content.....	2
Lipid Content.....	2
Lipid Quality	3
Mineral and Vitamin Content.....	3
Freshwater Fish in Human Nutrition.....	3
Freshwater Crustaceans	4
Freshwater Molluscs	4
Frogs.....	4
Microalgae.....	5
Aquatic Plants	5

Chapter 2: Algae and Plants.....	7
Algae.....	7
Phylum: Chlorophyta (Green Algae)	7
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> (Beyerinck) Beijerinck 1890.....	7
<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> H. Chick 1903	8
<i>Chlorella ellipsoidea</i> Gernceck 1907.....	9
<i>Prasiola japonica</i> Yatabe 1891	10
<i>Cladophora</i> sp.	11
<i>Cladophora glomerata</i> (Linnaeus) Kützing 1843	12
<i>Scenedesmus obliquus</i> (Turpin) Kützing 1833	
(= <i>Scenedesmus dimorphus</i>)	12
<i>Chlamydomonas reinhardtii</i> (P.A. Dang).....	13
<i>Haematococcus pluvialis</i> Flotow 1844.....	14
Phylum: Cyanophyta (Blue-Green Algae).....	16
<i>Nostochopsis lobatus</i> H.C. Wood ex Bornet & Flahault 1886.....	16
<i>Aphanizomenon flos-aquae</i> (Ralfs ex Bornet & Flahault Nevada)	17
<i>Anabaena cylindrica</i> Lemmermann 1896.....	19
<i>Calothrix fusca</i> Bornet & Flahault 1886	20
<i>Scytonema bohneri</i> Schmidle 1901	21
<i>Arthrospira platensis</i> Gomont 1892 (= <i>Spirulina platensis</i>)	22

<i>Arthrospira maxima</i> (Setchell & N.L. Gardner) Geitler 1932 (= <i>Spirulina maxima</i>).....	23
<i>Phyllocladus sacrum</i> Suringer 1872 (= <i>Aphanocladus sacrum</i>).....	24
<i>Gloeocapsa livida</i> (Carmichael) Kützing 1847 (= <i>Palmella livida</i>)	25
<i>Synechococcus elongatus</i> (Nägeli) Nägeli 1849	26
<i>Lyngbya limnetica</i> Lemmermann 1898 (= <i>Lyngbya lagerheimii</i>).....	27
<i>Oscillatoria acuminata</i> Gomont 1892 (= <i>Phormidium acuminatum</i>)	27
<i>Oscillatoria calcuttensis</i> Biswas 1925	28
<i>Oscillatoria foreau</i> Frémy 1942 (= <i>Phormidium foreau</i>)	28
Phylum: Charophyta (Stonewort Algae).....	29
<i>Spirogyra</i> sp.	29
Phylum: Haptophyta (Coccolithophorids)	30
<i>Dicranella vukobratov</i> Prauser 1958.....	30
Phylum: Rhodophyta (Red Algae).....	31
<i>Porphyridium cruentum</i> (S.F. Gray) Nägeli 1849 (= <i>Porphyridium purpureum</i>).....	31
<i>Lemanea australis</i> Atkinson 1890.....	31
<i>Lemanea torulosa</i> (Roth) C. Agardh 1814	32
<i>Lemanea fluviatilis</i> (Linnaeus) C. Agardh 1824.....	33
<i>Lemanea mamillata</i> Kützing 1845 (= <i>Lemanea fucina</i>)	34
<i>Lemanea catenata</i> (Kützing) (M.L. Vis & R.G. Sheath) (= <i>Paralemanea catenata</i>).....	34
Phylum: Euglenozoa (Flagellate Protozoa).....	36
<i>Euglena gracilis</i> O.F. Müller 1786.....	36
Plants.....	37
Phylum: Magnoliophyta (Flowering Plants)	37
Class: Magnoliopsida (Dicotyledons)	37
<i>Justicia americana</i> (Linnaeus).....	37
<i>Bacopa monnieri</i> (L.) (Pennell).....	38
<i>Mentha arvensis</i> (Linnaeus)	39
<i>Nymphaea odorata</i> (Aiton) (= <i>Nymphaea tuberosa</i>).....	40
<i>Nuphar variegata</i> (Engelm. ex Durand).....	41
<i>Nelumbo lutea</i> (Willd.)	42
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> (Gaertn.).....	43
<i>Alternanthera sessilis</i> (L.) (R.Br. ex DC)	44
<i>Polygonum barbatum</i> (L.)	45
<i>Rumex nepalensis</i> (Sprengel).....	46
<i>Rumex hastatus</i> (D. Don).....	47
<i>Rumex dentatus</i> (Linn.)	48
<i>Fagopyrum tataricum</i> (L.) (Gaertn.)	49
<i>Fagopyrum esculentum</i> (Moench)	49
<i>Enhydra fluctuans</i> (Lour.).....	51
<i>Trapa natans</i> (Linnaeus).....	52
<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i> (Linnaeus)	53
<i>Piper sarmentosum</i> (Roxb.)	54

<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i> (L.).....	55
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i> (W.T. Aiton).....	56
<i>Centella asiatica</i> (L.) (Urban).....	57
<i>Caltha palustris</i> (Linnaeus).....	58
<i>Hedyotis auricularia</i> (Linnaeus).....	59
<i>Oxalis corniculata</i> (L.)	60
<i>Viola pilosa</i> (Blume)	61
<i>Jussiaea repens</i> (Linnaeus)	62
<i>Jussiaea suffruticosa</i> (Linn.) (= <i>Ludwigia octovalvis</i>).....	63
<i>Limnophila aromaticoides</i> (Yuen P. Yang & S.H. Yen)	64
<i>Ipomoea aquatica</i> (Forssk.).....	65
Class: Polypodiopsida (Leptosporangiate Ferns).....	66
<i>Marsilea quadrifolia</i> (Linnaeus).....	66
<i>Marsilea minuta</i> (L.).....	67
<i>Ceratopteris thalictroides</i> (L.) (Brog्न.).....	68
Class: Liliopsida (Monocotyledons).....	69
<i>Dioscorea rotundata</i> (Poir.).....	69
<i>Commelina benghalensis</i> (L.)	70
<i>Monochoria vaginalis</i> (Burm. f.) (C. Presl ex Kunth).....	71
<i>Lemna minor</i> (Linnaeus)	72
<i>Orontium aquaticum</i> (Linnaeus).....	73
<i>Colocasia esculenta</i> (L.) (Schott).....	74
<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i> (Willd.).....	75
<i>Sagittaria cuneata</i> (E. Sheld.).....	76
<i>Sagittaria rigida</i> (Pursh)	77
<i>Vallisneria americana</i> (Michx.).....	78
<i>Potamogeton amplifolius</i> (Tuckerman).....	78
<i>Potamogeton pectinatus</i> (Linnaeus) (= <i>Stuckenia pectinata</i>)	79
<i>Potamogeton richardsonii</i> (A. Bennett) (Rydberg).....	80
<i>Typha latifolia</i> (Linnaeus).....	81
<i>Zizania aquatica</i> (Linnaeus).....	82
<i>Zizania latifolia</i> (Griseb.) (Turcz. ex Stapf.).....	83
<i>Oryza sativa</i> (Linnaeus)	84
<i>Oryza rufipogon</i> (Griff.).....	85
<i>Eleocharis dulcis</i> (Burm. f.) (Trin. ex Hensch.)	86
<i>Cyperus esculentus</i> (Linnaeus).....	87
<i>Carex stricta</i> (Lam.)	88
<i>Alpingia galanga</i> (L.) (Willd.)	89
<i>Hedycium coronarium</i> (J. Koenig)	90
<i>Etlingera elatior</i> (Jack) (R.M. Sm.)	91
Chapter 3: Crustaceans	93
Prawns	93
<i>Macrobrachium scabriculum</i> Heller 1862.....	93
<i>Macrobrachium idella idella</i> Hilgendorf 1898 (= <i>Macrobrachium rude</i>).....	94

<i>Macrobrachium malcomsonii</i> H. Milne-Edwards 1844	95
<i>Macrobrachium rosenbergii</i> De Man 1879	95
<i>Macrobrachium vollenhovenii</i> Herklots 1857	96
<i>Macrobrachium macrobrachion</i> Herklots 1851 (= <i>Palaemon africanus</i>)	97
Crayfish (Freshwater Lobsters)	98
<i>Astacus astacus</i> Linnaeus 1758	98
<i>Astacus leptodactylus</i> Eschscholtz 1823	99
<i>Procambarus clarkii</i> Girard 1852	99
<i>Procambarus zonangulus</i> Hobbs & Hobbs 1990	101
<i>Orconectes rusticus</i> Giard 1852	101
<i>Orconectes limosus</i> Rafinesque 1817	102
<i>Cherax destructor</i> Clark 1936	103
<i>Cherax tenuimanus</i> Smith 1912	103
<i>Cherax quadricarinatus</i> Von Martens 1868	104
Crabs	105
<i>Potamon potamios</i> Olivier 1804	105
<i>Paratelphusa masoniana</i> Henderson 1893	106
<i>Sudanonautes africanus</i> A. Milne-Edwards 1869	106
<i>Callinectes pallidus</i> De Rocheburne 1883	107
<i>Cardisoma armatum</i> Herklots 1851	108
<i>Spiralothelphusa hydrodroma</i> Herbst 1794	109
<i>Travancoriana schirnerae</i> Bott 1969	110
<i>Eriocheir sinensis</i> H. Milne-Edwards 1853	111
<i>Ozeotelphusa senex senex</i> Fabricius (= <i>Oziotelphusa wagrakarowensis</i>)	112
Chapter 4: Molluscs	113
Class: Bivalvia (Bivalves)	113
Clams	113
<i>Corbicula fluminea</i> Prime 1864 (= <i>Corbicula leana</i>)	113
Mussels	114
<i>Lamellidens jenkinsianus</i> Benson 1862	114
<i>Lamellidens generosus</i> Gould 1847 (= <i>Unio generosus</i>)	114
<i>Lamellidens marginalis</i> Lamarck 1819	115
<i>Parreysia corrugata</i> Müller 1774	116
<i>Parreysia flavidens</i> Benson 1862	116
<i>Parreysia khadakvaslaensis</i> Ray 1966 (<i>Radiatula khadakvaslaensis</i>)	117
<i>Unio terminalis</i> Bourguignat 1852 (= <i>Unio crassus</i>)	117
<i>Potomida littoralis</i> Cuvier 1798 (= <i>Unio littoralis</i>)	118
<i>Unio tigridis</i> Bourguignat 1853	118
Class: Gastropoda (Snails)	119
<i>Lissachatina fulica</i> Bowdich 1822 (= <i>Achatina fulica</i>)	119
<i>Helix</i> sp.	120
<i>Anisus convexiusculus</i> Hutton 1849	120

<i>Nucella lapillus</i> Linnaeus 1758	121
<i>Lanistes varicus</i> Müller 1774.....	122
<i>Pila ampullacea</i> Linnaeus 1758	123
<i>Pila globosa</i> Swainson 1822.....	123
<i>Pila ovata</i> Olivier 1808.....	124
<i>Pila virens</i> Lamarck 1822	125
<i>Lanistes libycus</i> Morelet 1848.....	125
<i>Pomacea bridgesii</i> Reeve 1856	126
<i>Pomacea canaliculata</i> Lamarck 1819	126
<i>Tympanotonus fuscatus</i> var. <i>radula</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	127
<i>Bellamya</i> (<i>Viviparus</i>) <i>bengalensis</i> Lamarck 1882.....	128
Chapter 5: Fishes.....	131
Order: Cypriniformes (Carps).....	131
Family: Cyprinidae (Minnows or Carps)	131
<i>Catla catla</i> Hamilton 1822.....	131
<i>Labeo rohita</i> F. Hamilton 1822.....	132
<i>Labeo pangusia</i> Hamilton 1822.....	132
<i>Labeo gonius</i> Hamilton 1822	133
<i>Labeo boggut</i> Sykes 1839.....	134
<i>Labeo calbasu</i> Hamilton 1822	134
<i>Labeo bata</i> Hamilton 1822	135
<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i> Hamilton 1822	135
<i>Cirrhinus cirrhosus</i> Bloch 1795	136
<i>Cyprinus carpio</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	136
<i>Cyprinus carpio communis</i> Linnaeus.....	138
<i>Cyprinus carpio specularis</i> Lacepede 1803.....	138
<i>Hypophthalmichthys molitrix</i> Valenciennes 1844.....	139
<i>Ctenopharyngodon idellus</i> Valenciennes 1844.....	139
<i>Hypophthalmichthys nobilis</i> Richardson 1845 (= <i>Aristichthys nobilis</i>).....	140
<i>Tinca tinca</i> Linnaeus 1758	141
<i>Puntius chola</i> Hamilton 1822	142
<i>Puntius gonionotus</i> Bleeker 1850 (= <i>Puntius javanicus</i> , <i>Barbonemus gonionotus</i>).....	143
<i>Puntius sophore</i> F. Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Puntius stigma</i>)	143
<i>Puntius conchonus</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Barbus conchonus</i>)	144
<i>Puntius ticto</i> Hamilton 1822.....	145
<i>Barbus barbus</i> Linnaeus 1758	145
<i>Barbus carnaticus</i> Jerdon 1849 (= <i>Barbodes carnaticus</i> , <i>Puntius carnaticus</i>).....	146
<i>Barbus filamentosus</i> Valenciennes 1844 (= <i>Puntius filamentosus</i> , <i>Dawkinsia filamentosa</i>).....	147
<i>Barbus grypus</i> Heckel 1843.....	147
<i>Schizopyge niger</i> Heckel 1838.....	148

<i>Schizothorax curvifrons</i> Heckel 1838	149
<i>Schizothorax esocinus</i> Heckel 1838	149
<i>Schizothorax plagiosomus</i> Heckel 1838	150
<i>Schizothorax labiatus</i> McClelland 1842	150
<i>Schizothorax richardsonii</i> Gray 1832	151
<i>Neolissochilus hexagonolepis</i> McClelland 1839	152
<i>Raiamas guttatus</i> Day 1870	152
<i>Tor putitora</i> F. Hamilton 1822	153
<i>Tor tor</i> Hamilton 1822	153
<i>Tor tambroides</i> Bleeker 1854	154
<i>Tor khudree</i> Sykes 1839	155
<i>Rasbora daniconius</i> Hamilton 1822	155
<i>Rasbora tornieri</i> Ahl 1922	156
<i>Esomus danricus</i> Hamilton 1822	157
<i>Esomus longimanus</i> Lunel 1881	157
<i>Neolissochilus stracheyi</i> Day 1871	158
<i>Semiplotus manipurensis</i> Vishwanath & Kosygin 2000	159
<i>Abramis brama</i> Linnaeus 1758	159
<i>Amblypharyngodon mola</i> Hamilton 1822	160
<i>Leptobarbus hoevenii</i> Bleeker 1851	161
<i>Hampala macrolepidota</i> Kuhl & van Hasselt 1823	161
<i>Osteochilus vittatus</i> Valenciennes 1842 (= <i>Osteochilus hasseltii</i>)	162
<i>Aspius aspius</i> Linnaeus 1758	163
<i>Leptocypris niloticus</i> Joannis 1835 (= <i>Barilius niloticus</i>)	163
<i>Barilius bendelisis</i> Hamilton 1807	164
<i>Systomus sarana</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Puntius sarana</i>)	165
<i>Rutilus frisii</i> Nordmann 1840	165
<i>Devario aequipinnatus</i> McClelland 1839 (= <i>Danio aequipinnatus</i>)	166
<i>Garra mullya</i> Sykes 1839	166
<i>Osteobrama cotio cotio</i> Hamilton 1822	167
<i>Salmostoma phulo</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Salmophasia phulo</i>)	167
<i>Salmophasia bacaila</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Oxygaster bacaila</i>)	168
<i>Parachela siamensis</i> Günther 1868 (= <i>Oxygaster oxygastroides</i>)	168
<i>Garra gatyla</i> J.E. Gray 1830	169
<i>Garra annandalei</i> Hora 1921	169
<i>Garra lissorhynchus</i> McClelland 1842	170
Family: Nemacheilidae (River Loaches)	171
<i>Acanthocobitis botia</i> Hamilton 1822	171
Family: Cobitidae (Loaches)	171
<i>Lepidocephalus guntea</i> Hamilton 1822	171
<i>Lepidocephalichthys thermalis</i> Valenciennes 1846 (= <i>Lepidocephalus thermalis</i>)	172
Family: Botiidae (Dwarf Loach, Dwarf Chain Loach)	173
<i>Syncrossus berdmorei</i> Blyth 1860 (= <i>Botia berdmorei</i>)	173

Order: Perciformes (Perches and Allies).....	173
Family: Anabantidae (Climbing Gouramies or Climbing Perches)	173
<i>Anabas testudineus</i> Bloch 1792	173
Family: Scatophagidae (Scats)	175
<i>Scatophagus argus argus</i> Linnaeus 1766	175
Family: Sciaenidae (Drums, Croakers).....	176
<i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i> Rafinesque 1819.....	176
<i>Pseudolithus typus</i> Bleeker 1863.....	176
<i>Pseudolithus elongatus</i> Bowdich 1825	177
Family: Channidae (Snakeheads).....	178
<i>Channa marulius</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Ophiocephalus marulius</i>).....	178
<i>Channa micropeltes</i> Cuvier 1831.....	179
<i>Channa punctatus</i> Bloch 1793	180
<i>Channa striata</i> Bloch 1793 (= <i>Ophiocephalus striatus</i>)	181
<i>Parachanna obscura</i> Günther 1861 (= <i>Channa obscura</i>).....	182
Family: Ambassidae (Asiatic Glass Fishes).....	182
<i>Chanda nama</i> Hamilton 1822.....	182
<i>Pseudambassis baculis</i> Hamilton 1822	183
<i>Parambassis ranga</i> Hamilton 1822	183
<i>Parambassis wolffii</i> Bleeker 1850.....	184
Family: Moronidae (Temperate Basses).....	185
<i>Morone saxatilis</i> Walbaum 1792	185
<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i> Linnaeus 1758	186
Family: Gobiidae (Gobies).....	187
<i>Glossogobius giuris</i> Hamilton 1822.....	187
Family: Latidae (Lates Perches).....	187
<i>Lates niloticus</i> Linnaeus 1758	187
Family: Cichlidae (Cichlids)	188
<i>Oreochromis aureus</i> Steindachner 1864.....	188
<i>Oreochromis mossambicus</i> Peters 1852	189
<i>Oreochromis niloticus</i> Linnaeus 1758 (= <i>Tilapia niloticus</i>)	190
<i>Sarotherodon galilaeus</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	191
<i>Tilapia guineensis</i> Günther 1862.....	192
<i>Sarotherodon melanotheron</i> Rüppell 1852 (= <i>Tilapia melanotheron</i>)	192
<i>Tilapia rendalli</i> Boulenger 1897.....	193
<i>Tilapia zillii</i> Gervais 1848	194
<i>Etilapia suratensis</i> Bloch 1790	195
Family: Helostomatidae (Kissing Gourami)	195
<i>Helostoma temminckii</i> G. Cuvier 1829	195
Family: Osphronemidae (Gouramies)	196
<i>Colisa fasciatus</i> (Bloch and Schneider) (= <i>Trichogaster fasciatus</i>)	196
<i>Osphronemus goramy</i> Lacepède 1801	197
<i>Trichogaster pectoralis</i> Regan 1910.....	198
<i>Trichogaster trichopterus</i> Pallas 1770	198
<i>Trichogaster lalius</i> F. Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Colisa lalia</i>)	199

Family: Percidae (Perches).....	200
<i>Perca flavescens</i> Mitchell 1814.....	200
<i>Perca fluviatilis</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	201
<i>Sander lucioperca</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	202
Family: Polynemidae (Threadfins).....	203
<i>Pentanemus quinquarius</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	203
Family: Pomatonidae (Blue Fishes).....	204
<i>Pomatomas saltatrix</i> Linnaeus 1766.....	204
Family: Nandidae (Asian Leaf Fishes).....	205
<i>Nandus nandus</i> Hamilton 1822.....	205
Family: Scombridae (Mackerels).....	206
<i>Scoberomorus tritor</i> Cuvier 1832.....	206
Order: Siluriformes (Catfishes).....	207
Family: Siluridae (Sheatfishes).....	207
<i>Ompok bimaculatus</i> Bloch 1794.....	207
<i>Kryptopterus micronema</i> Bleeker 1846 (= <i>Cryptopterus micronema</i>).....	207
<i>Silurus triostegus</i> Heckel 1843.....	208
<i>Silurus glanis</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	209
<i>Wallago attu</i> Bloch & Schneider 1801.....	210
Family: Schilbeidae (Schilbid Catfishes).....	210
<i>Eutropiichthys vacha</i> Hamilton 1822.....	210
<i>Ailia coila</i> Hamilton 1822.....	211
<i>Clupisoma atherinoides</i> Bloch 1794 (= <i>Pseudeutropius atherinoides</i> , <i>Neotropius atherinoides</i>).....	211
<i>Ailiichthys punctata</i> Day 1872 (= <i>Ailia punctatus</i>).....	212
<i>Clupisoma garua</i> Hamilton 1822.....	212
<i>Sperata aor</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Macrones aor</i>).....	213
Family: Bagridae (Bagrid Catfishes).....	214
<i>Sperata seenghala</i> Sykes 1839.....	214
<i>Bagrus bayad</i> Forsskål 1775.....	214
<i>Rita rita</i> Hamilton 1822.....	215
<i>Mystus tengara</i> Hamilton 1822.....	215
<i>Mystus cavasius</i> Hamilton 1822.....	216
Family: Claroteidae (Claroteid Catfishes).....	217
<i>Chrysichthys nigrodigitatus</i> Lacepède 1803.....	217
<i>Auchenoglanis biscutatus</i> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire 1809.....	217
Family: Clariidae (Airbreathing Catfishes).....	218
<i>Clarias anguillaris</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	218
<i>Clarias batrachus</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	219
<i>Clarias gariepinus</i> Burchell 1822.....	219
<i>Heterobranchus bidorsalis</i> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire 1809.....	221
Family: Mochokidae (Squeakers or Upside-Down Catfishes).....	221
<i>Hemisynodontis membranaceus</i> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire 1809 (= <i>Synodontis membranacea</i>).....	221
<i>Synodontis schall</i> Bloch & Schneider 1801.....	222

Family: Heteropneustidae (Airsac Catfishes)	223
<i>Heteropneustes fossilis</i> Bloch 1794	223
Family: Ictaluridae (North American Freshwater Catfishes)	224
<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i> Rafinesque 1818	224
Family: Sisoridae (Sisorid Catfishes)	225
<i>Hemibagrus nemurus</i> Valenciennes 1840 (= <i>Macrones nemurus</i> , <i>Mystus nemurus</i>).....	225
Family: Pangasidae (Shark Catfishes)	226
<i>Pangasianodon hypophthalmus</i> Sauvage 1878	226
<i>Pangasius pangasius</i> Hamilton 1822	226
Order: Clupeiformes (Herrings)	228
Family: Clupeidae (Herrings, Shads)	228
<i>Gudusia chapra</i> Hamilton 1822	228
<i>Corica soborna</i> Hamilton 1822	228
<i>Tenulosa ilisha</i> Hamilton 1822	229
<i>Limnothrissa miodon</i> Boulenger 1906	229
<i>Stolothrissa tanganyicae</i> Regan 1917	230
Order: Esociformes (Pikes and Pickerels)	231
Family: Esocidae (Pikes)	231
<i>Esox lucius</i> Linnaeus 1758	231
Order: Osteoglossiformes (Bony Tongues)	232
Family: Notopteridae (Featherbacks or Knifefishes)	232
<i>Notopterus notopterus</i> Pallas 1769	232
<i>Chitala chitala</i> Hamilton 1822	233
Family: Arapaimidae (Bony Tongues)	233
<i>Heterotis niloticus</i> Cuvier 1829	233
Family: Mormyridae (Elephant Fishes)	234
<i>Gnathonemus tamandua</i> Günther 1862 (= <i>Campylomormyrus tamandua</i>)	234
<i>Mormyrus rume</i> Valenciennes 1847	235
Order: Gadiformes (Cods, Hakes, Grenadiers, Moras)	235
Family: Lotidae (Hakes, Burbot)	235
<i>Lota lota</i> Linnaeus 1758	235
Order: Salmoniformes (Salmon)	236
Family: Salmonidae (Salmon)	236
<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i> Walbaum 1792	236
<i>Oncorhynchus gorbuscha</i> Walbaum 1792	237
<i>Oncorhynchus keta</i> Walbaum 1792	238
<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i> Walbaum 1792	239
<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i> Walbaum 1792 (= <i>Salmo gairdneri</i>)	240
<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i> Walbaum 1792	241
<i>Salmo salar</i> Linnaeus 1758	241
<i>Salmo trutta</i> Linnaeus 1758	242
<i>Salmo macrostigma</i> Duméril 1858 (= <i>Salmo trutta macrostigma</i>)	243
<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i> Mitchell 1814	243

<i>Salvelinus namaycush</i> Walbaum 1792	244
<i>Coregonus albula</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	245
Order: Characiformes (Characins)	245
Family: Characidae (Characins).....	245
<i>Brycon orbignyana</i> Valenciennes 1850.....	245
<i>Piaractus brachypomus</i> G. Cuvier 1818.....	246
Family: Citharinidae (Lutefishes)	247
<i>Citharinus cithrus</i> Geoffroy St. Hilaire 1809	247
<i>Brycinus nurse</i> Rüppell, 1832 (= <i>Alestes nurse</i>).....	247
Order: Elopiformes (Tarpons, Tenpounders).....	248
Family: Megalopidae (Oxeye Herrings, Tarpons)	248
<i>Megalops atlanticus</i> Valenciennes 1847 (= <i>Tarpon atlanticus</i>).....	248
Order: Tetraodontiformes (Pufferfishes and Allies).....	249
Family: Tetraodontidae (Pufferfishes, Toadfishes)	249
<i>Tetraodon cutcutia</i> Hamilton 1822	249
<i>Tetraodon lineatus</i> Linnaeus 1758	250
Order: Synbranchiformes (Swamp Eels)	251
Family: Mastacembelidae (Spiny Eels).....	251
<i>Macrognathus pancalus</i> Hamilton 1822 (= <i>Mastacembelus punctatus</i>).....	251
<i>Mastacembelus mastacembelus</i> Banks & Solander 1794	251
<i>Macrognathus aculeatus</i> Bloch 1786	252
Order: Beloniformes (Halfbeaks, Needlefishes).....	253
Family: Belonidae (Needlefishes).....	253
<i>Xenentodon cancila</i> Hamilton 1822.....	253
Order: Anguilliformes (Eels)	254
Family: Anguillidae (Freshwater Eels)	254
<i>Anguilla japonica</i> Temminck & Schlegel 1846	254
<i>Anguilla anguilla</i> Linnaeus 1758 (= <i>Muraena anguilla</i>).....	255
Order: Acipenseriformes (Sturgeon-Like Fish).....	256
Family: Acipenseridae (Sturgeon).....	256
<i>Acipenser persicus</i> Borodin 1897	256
<i>Acipenser ruthenus</i> Linnaeus 1758	256
<i>Huso huso</i> Linnaeus 1758.....	257
Chapter 6: Amphibians (Frogs)	259
Family: Dicroglossidae	259
<i>Hoplobatrachus occipitalis</i> Günther 1858.....	259
<i>Hoplobatrachus rugulosus</i> Wiegmann 1834.....	260
<i>Limnonectes leporinus</i> Andersson 1923.....	261
Family: Ptychadenidae	262
<i>Ptychadena pumilio</i> Boulenger 1920.....	262
Family: Ranidae	263
<i>Rana catesbeiana</i> Shaw 1862 (= <i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>).....	263
<i>Pelophylax esculentus</i> Linnaeus 1758 (= <i>Rana esculenta</i>).....	264
<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i> Pallas 1771 (= <i>Rana ridibunda</i>).....	265

<i>Hylarana galamensis</i> Duméril and Bibron 1841 (= <i>Rana galamensis</i>).....	266
<i>Euphlyctis hexadactylus</i> Lesson 1834 (= <i>Rana hexadactyla</i>).....	267
<i>Lithobates clamitans</i> Latreille 1801 (= <i>Rana clamitans</i>).....	268
Family: Pipidae.....	269
<i>Xenopus muelleri</i> Peters 1844.....	269
Family: Hylidae.....	270
<i>Osteopilus septentrionalis</i> A.M.C. Duméril & Bibron 1841	270
References.....	271

PREFACE

Today, fishing is considered to be the largest extractive use of wildlife in the world. Freshwater fisheries provide food and a livelihood for millions of the poorest people, and also contribute to the overall economic well-being by means of export commodity trade, tourism, and recreation. It is estimated that freshwater fishes make up more than 6% of the world's annual animal protein supplies for humans. It is the major and often only source of animal protein for low-income families. Global freshwater supports at least 100,000 species out of approximately 1.8 million—almost 6% of all described species. Inland waters and freshwater biodiversity constitute a valuable natural resource in economic, cultural, aesthetic, scientific, and educational terms. It is always important to know the nutritional facts of freshwater flora and fauna occupying different habitats.

Although several books are available on limnology and aquatic biology, no books on the nutritional aspects of edible freshwater life are available presently. Keeping this in consideration, an

attempt has now been made. This book deals with nutritional facts of different groups of edible freshwater life, viz., algae and plants, crustaceans (prawns, crayfish, and crabs), molluscs (bivalves and gastropods), fish, and frogs, along with their characteristics, such as classification, common names, habitats, global distribution, and biological features. When published, this book will be of great use for the undergraduate and postgraduate students of disciplines such as fisheries science, aquatic biology, biotechnology, environmental science, and life sciences, besides serving as a standard reference in the libraries of colleges and universities.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Freshwater habitats such as ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, bogs, swamps, and marshes are important components of the world. The diversity of organisms in these biotopes is important both ecologically and economically. Freshwater biomes are large communities of plants and animals centered around water with less than 1% salt concentration. Aquatic plants, such as algae, diatoms,

and rooted macrophytes, use nutrients, light, and carbon dioxide to produce oxygen that, once released, is dissolved directly into the water. They also remove unwanted toxins found in the water, which could be harmful to the surrounding fish. The structure and composition of benthic communities in freshwater ecosystems is an excellent bioindicator of pollution and habitat quality.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN FRESHWATER BIOMES

There are many diverse flora and fauna in freshwater biomes. Algae, although not very pretty or fun to swim in, is a favorite snack for most of the animals that live in a freshwater biome. Plants are not just a snack for the freshwater animals. They provide oxygen through the process of photosynthesis. There is no shortage of animals or plants living in a freshwater biome. It is believed

that more than 700 species of fish and 1200 species of amphibians, molluscs, and insects all live in these areas. There are plenty of macro animals that live in the water of the freshwater biome. They include crabs, shrimps, frogs, and turtles. Fish are very common in the freshwater biome. However, where there is freshwater, one can often find a huge number of different types of mammals.

MALNUTRITION, A GLOBAL PROBLEM

At present, more than 30% of humanity is suffering from malnutrition and food-related diseases, either in the form of malnutrition and undernourishment or in the form of excessive nutrient intake and obesity. The global reach of malnutrition and food insecurity is such that hunger is still the world's number one health risk, killing more people every year than

acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), malaria, and tuberculosis combined (Tacon et al., 2010; World Food Programme (WFP), 2012). The global magnitude and consequences of hunger and malnutrition are profound and long-lasting, with 925 million chronically undernourished people within the developing world and over 6.6 million child deaths every year

related to malnutrition. Further, more than 2 billion people in the world suffer from specific dietary micronutrient deficiencies, including iron, iodine, vitamin A, and zinc (WFP, 2012). In terms of per capita food supply,

total aquatic animal food supply (live weight equivalent) has grown from 11.1 kg in 1970 to 18.6 kg in 2010, and per capita aquatic meat supply has grown from 8.7 kg in 1970 to 13.2 kg in 2010 (FAO/FAOSTAT, 2012).

IMPORTANCE OF FRESHWATER FISHERIES

Today, fishing remains the largest use of wildlife in the world. Ninety-percent of all freshwater fisheries occur in developing countries, and freshwater fishes make up more than 6% of the world's annual animal protein supplies for humans (FAO, 2007). They provide food and a livelihood for millions of the world's poorest people, and

also contribute to the overall economic well-being by means of export commodity trade, tourism, and recreation. Some people derive great aesthetic pleasure from recreational activities in freshwaters, such as fishing, swimming, kayaking, and canoeing. Recreation and tourism help the entire industry of skilled craftspeople.

IMPORTANCE OF FRESHWATER FISH

Freshwater fish make up an important portion of aquatic organisms that are used as human foodstuffs. In many regions of the world, freshwater fish are

a significant source of animal protein. They also contain considerable quantities of valuable lipids as well as minerals and vitamins.

PROTEIN CONTENT

In the dry matter of muscle or flesh, protein is the main component. The protein content generally amounts to 15 to 20% of wet weight in the muscle. In lipid-rich fish species, the protein

level is lower than in species with poor lipid content in their flesh. The amino acid composition of the protein in different freshwater fish species is more or less similar.

LIPID CONTENT

Depending on species, size, and nutrition, the lipid level of the flesh in freshwater fish can vary considerably. There are freshwater fish species like pike (*Esox lucius*), perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), and pike-perch (*Sander lucioperca*) with exceptionally lean meat, while other species are characterized by medium or even high lipid levels in their muscle,

e.g., eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). Lipid content varies between less than 5% and more than 50% in the dry matter of muscle. With growing fish size, the lipid level in the muscle generally increases. The lipid content of large rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) weighing more than 1000 g frequently is about 10% of wet weight.

LIPID QUALITY

Lipids of freshwater fish are characterized by high levels of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, e.g., eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). But they also contain considerable amounts of n-6 fatty acids, especially linoleic acid and arachidonic acid. While the essential fatty acid ratio (n-3/n-6) of marine fish generally varies between 5 and 10, the essential fatty acid ratio of freshwater fish is 1 to 4. This seems appropriate for human nutrition. Because of their favorable fatty acid composition, the lipids of freshwater fish are of outstanding nutritional significance. It is well known that not only the n-6 fatty acids are essential for human nutrition, but the n-3 fatty acids are just as necessary and must also be supplied

in the diet. Both series of essential fatty acids cannot be synthesized by other animals or humans. Clinical tests with hypertensive patients in many countries proved the effectiveness of eating freshwater fish in lowering blood pressure and plasma lipids. Hypertensive patients were put on a 2-week diet of 100 g silver carp meat (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*) per day. This resulted in a significant drop in systolic blood pressure by 15 mmHg and diastolic pressure by 9 mmHg. In blood plasma, the level of triacylglycerols was reduced by 0.6 mmol/L, the HDL cholesterol increased by 0.26 mmol/L, and the phospholipid concentration remained constant.

MINERAL AND VITAMIN CONTENT

Freshwater fish are also a good source for several minerals and vitamins in human nutrition. Their meat is rich in potassium, phosphorus, sodium, magnesium, and calcium. The flesh

of freshwater fish also contains some trace elements, e.g., iron and manganese. Freshwater fish can also meet the demand for several vitamins, such as vitamin A and some B vitamins.

FRESHWATER FISH IN HUMAN NUTRITION

Freshwater fish are a nutritious choice for lunch or dinner, as they are low in fat and high in protein. It has been reported that the average freshwater fish consumption is 56.6 kg/person/year, and one serving of most freshwater fish provides more than 30% of the dietary reference intake of protein for adults. Freshwater fishes form the major and often only source of animal protein for low-income families. Although not

as high in healthy omega-3 fatty acids as some saltwater fish, one serving of most freshwater fish provides more than 30% of the dietary reference intake of protein for adults.

Freshwater fish are therefore considered to be wholesome foodstuffs of high nutritive value. As freshwater fish flesh has good digestibility, it is also well suited as a healthy diet for children and seniors (Steffens, 2006).

FRESHWATER CRUSTACEANS

Among freshwater crustaceans, crayfish assume greater importance, as they have a super healthy combination of nutrients. From an almost pure form of protein to a healthy amount of omega-3 fatty acids, they are the most beneficial fats to eat for human nutrition. Crayfish protein has large amounts of the amino acid tyrosine that mentally energizes the brain. In addition, there is a healthy supply of vitamins D and A, as well as calcium, potassium, copper, and zinc in crayfish.

Iodine is also often mentioned as an important ingredient. Further, crayfish are a very low carbohydrate food, and you can safely eat crayfish without putting on unwanted weight. Next to crayfish, freshwater crabs are important, as their meat is nutritionally good, being high in vitamins, high-quality proteins, and amino acids. It is also rich in minerals such as calcium, copper, zinc, phosphorus, and iron, while having lower levels of fat and carbohydrates.

FRESHWATER MOLLUSCS

Freshwater bivalves, the class of molluscs that includes clams and mussels, are extremely rich in a unique combination of nutrients that promote men’s health. These organisms are a superior source of low-calorie protein loaded with minerals such as potassium, phosphorus, manganese, iron, selenium, and zinc and vitamins such as B3, B12, C, and riboflavin. Three ounces of raw clams will cost

you only 63 calories, but you get 11 g of protein, 66% of the daily recommended amount of iron, and 700% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin B12. Chinese medicine recommends clams for treating hemorrhoids. The importance of freshwater gastropods (snails) in mitigating the protein deficiency in poor countries, such as Bangladesh, cannot be overlooked.

FROGS

A number of species of frogs, including the bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) and green frog (*Rana clamitans*), are nowadays harvested from the wild, and their legs are sold as a luxury food

in expensive restaurants of several countries. A summary of compositional data of nutritional facts of major freshwater faunal groups is given below.

Nutritional Status of Major Freshwater Groups (per 100 g (Fresh Weight Basis))

	Protein (g)		Fat (g)		Ca (mg)		Fe (mg)		Vitamin A (µg)	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Fish	9.7	22.7	0.8	8	17	1751	0.6	9.2	5	1800
Crustacean	10.7	21.2	0.9	3.3	75	5000	0.6	7.5	0	133
Mollusc	7	20.2	0.3	1.4	16	2500	7	26.6	0	243
Frogs	15.1	20.5	0.2	2	19	1293	0.7	3.8	Low	

Source: Data from James (2006); Nurhasan (2008).

MICROALGAE

Algae have been used as a food source and for treatment of various ailments for over 2000 years. They form numerous compounds that are presently used in the development of new nutraceuticals and have the potential to become more intensively exploited. Different types of algae, specifically microalgae, are more prevalent in food supplements and nutraceuticals due to their capability of producing necessary vitamins, including A (retinol), B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), B6 (pyridoxine), B9 (folic acid), B12 (cobalamin), C (L-ascorbic acid), D, E (tocopherol), and H (biotin).

Also, these organisms concentrate essential elements, including potassium, zinc, iodine, selenium, iron, manganese, copper, phosphorus, sodium, nitrogen, magnesium, cobalt, molybdenum, sulfur, and calcium. Algae are also high producers of essential amino acids and omega 6 (arachidonic acid) and omega 3 (docosahexaenoic acid, eicosapentaenoic acid) fatty acids. Due to their abundant production of beneficial compounds and nutritive contents, the market for increased algae production for nutraceuticals is lucrative and imminent.

AQUATIC PLANTS

Some aquatic plants have a long tradition as human food. *Oryza sativa* is an emergent aquatic plant and the only vascular hydrophyte that is a major agronomic species. It is one of the world's main crops and forms the staple diet of over half the world's population. A small but important number of other aquatic crops exist, such as water chestnut (*Trapa* spp.), lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), and watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*). *Ipomoea aquatica* is one of the few aquatics grown as a green vegetable.

Aquatic macrophytes present organs that, due to their accumulated food reserves, are of potential nutritional value to man: among them, seeds, fruits, and swollen vegetative perennating organs are the most important. A variety of fruits and seeds are rich in oil, starch, or protein and can be eaten raw or dried and ground to flour, which can be baked with water or milk to give a kind of bread or cake. Numerous rhizomes and tubers are similarly rich in carbohydrates, especially starch, sugar,

and mucilage, and are wholly edible when raw or cooked. The foliage of many macrophytes provides acceptable salad ingredients or cooked vegetable dishes. In the Amazon, Indians used to utilize water hyacinth ashes as salt, and in the Northeast region of Brazil, the leaves of several species of macrophytes are often used in salads due to their high nutritional value and good palatability. The rhizomes of many other macrophytes are also used in the production of cookies, cakes, and other products. In Brazil, one of the most used macrophytes with nutritional value to man is the watercress (*Nasturtium* sp.), and it is often used in fresh or cooked dishes (Thomaz et al., 2009).

In general, aquatic plants are somewhat low in lysine and methionine when compared to meat proteins. Phenylalanine is present in very small quantities in *Alternanthera philoxeroides* and *Sagittaria latifolia*. Otherwise, amino acid levels are similar to those for meat proteins and crop plant leaf

protein isolates. Hence, leaf protein from aquatic plants is of sufficiently high amino acid quality to be useful as a dietary supplement. As the nutritive value of aquatic plants often contains "as much or more crude protein, crude fat, and mineral matter, than many conventional forage crops," such plants could be used as food and temporarily help alleviate food shortages until lasting agricultural and social solutions are found (Boyd, 1968a, 1968b).

In order to alleviate the problems relating to malnutrition among the people of developing and underdeveloped countries, there is an urgent need to identify new species rich in nutrients. In this regard, assessment of the

nutritional quality of freshwater flora and fauna of edible value would be of great use to add new and cheap sources of animal proteins. Further, by applying the knowledge of nutritional status, one can select the needed species to harvest. This may help conserve the freshwater ecosystems and their biodiversity, which is presently an urgent need (Virginia Tech, 2009). In the present report, an attempt has been made to present detailed information on the nutritional facts of different groups of freshwater life. All table information relates to mean values of fresh weight (FW) (wet weight (WW)) or dry matter (DM) (dry weight (DW)) adult specimens.

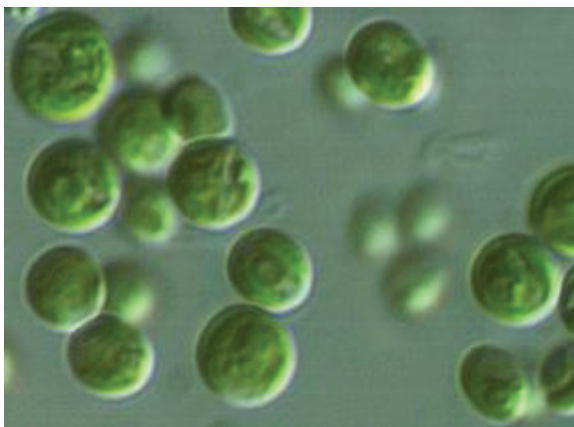
2

ALGAE AND PLANTS

ALGAE

PHYLUM: CHLOROPHYTA (GREEN ALGAE)

***Chlorella vulgaris* (Beyerinck) Beijerinck 1890**



Phylum: Chlorophyta

Class: Trebouxiophyceae

Order: Chlorellales

Family: Chlorellaceae

Common name: Chlorella.

Distribution: Atlantic islands, North America, South America, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Europe (AlgaeBase).

Habitat: Freshwater and terrestrial habitats.

Description: This species is small, unicellular, and nonmotile, about 2–15 μm in diameter. Cells are spherical or ellipsoidal with a single, parietal, cup-shaped (sometimes plate-like) chloroplast with or without a pyrenoid. Cell wall is generally thin and smooth. Cells contain green photosynthetic pigments, viz., chlorophyll *a* and *b* in the chloroplast. It is an attractive potential food source because it is high in protein and other essential nutrients. It is also a popular dietary supplement (van Vuuren et al., 2006).

Nutritional Facts

Proximate Composition (g/100 g DM)

Moisture	Ash	Protein	Lipid	CHO ^a	Fiber
9.95	6.87	48.19	5.60	29.85	17.06

^a Carbohydrate.

Minerals (mg/100 g)

Ca	Mg	Zn	Na	K	Cu	Fe
1425	851	293	101	1197	48	82

Vitamins

Retinol (µg/g)	C (mg/g)	E (mg/g)
132.15	0.39	27.87

Source: Data from Yusof et al. (2011).

Amino Acids (g/16 gN)

Isoleucine	3.8
Leucine	8.8
Valine	5.5
Lysine	8.4
Phenylalanine	5.0
Tyrosine	3.4
Methionine	2.2
Cysteine	1.4

Tryptophan	2.1
Threonine	4.8
Alanine	7.9
Arginine	6.4
Aspartic acid	9.0
Glutamic acid	11.6
Glycine	5.8
Histidine	2.0
Proline	4.8
Serine	4.1

Fatty Acids (% of Total Lipids)

12:0	0
14:0	0.9
14:1	2.0
15:0	1.6
16:0	20.4
16:1	5.8
16:2	1.7
17:0	2.5
18:0	15.3
18:1	6.6
18:2	1.5
20:2	1.5
20:3	20.8

Source: Data from Becker (1994).

Chlorella pyrenoidosa H. Chick 1903



Order: Chlorellales

Family: Chlorellaceae

Common name: Chlorella.

Distribution: Worldwide; Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand (AlgaeBase).

Habitat: Freshwater bodies.

Description: This species is small, unicellular, and nonmotile, about 2–15 μm in diameter. Cells are spherical or ellipsoidal with a single, parietal, cup-shaped (sometimes plate-like) chloroplast with or without a pyrenoid. Cell wall is generally thin and smooth. Cells contain green photosynthetic pigments, viz., chlorophyll *a* and *b* in the chloroplast. Over 24 vitamins and minerals (plus vital trace elements) and 19 amino acids (including all 8 essential ones) are available in this species. Further, highly digestible, complete protein and essential fatty acids—omega-3, omega-6, and gamma-linolenic acid (GLA)—are also present. Hence, this species is considered a popular food supplement (van Vuuren et al., 2006).

Nutritional Facts

Proximate Composition (% DM)

Protein	CHO ^a	Lipids
57	26	2

^a Carbohydrate.

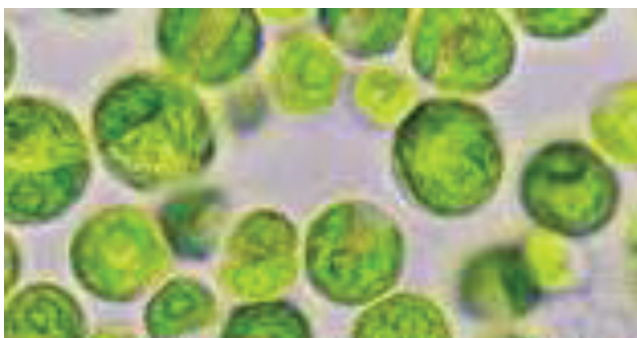
Source: Data from Becker (1994).

Amino Acids (g/16gN)

Isoleucine	3.4
Leucine	4.0
Valine	5.1
Lysine	7.9
Phenylalanine	4.5
Tyrosine	2.7
Methionine	1.8
Cysteine	0
Tryptophan	1.4
Threonine	3.2
Alanine	5.9
Arginine	5.6
Aspartic acid	5.9
Glutamic acid	9.3
Glycine	4.8
Histidine	1.4
Proline	4.0
Serine	2.2

Source: Data from Becker (1994).

Chlorella ellipsoidea Gernceck 1907



Order: Chlorellales

Family: Chlorellaceae

Common name: Chlorella.

Distribution: Europe, Southwest Asia, Caribbean islands, Australia and New Zealand (AlgaeBase).

Habitat: Freshwater and terrestrial areas.

Description: Cells of this species are 1.5–13 µm wide and 2–15 µm long. Chloroplast is more lobed with age. Margins are irregularly undulate and occasionally incised. Pyrenoid is associated with numerous starch grains. Autospores are ellipsoidal. This species serves as a food supplement (van Vuuren et al., 2006).

Nutritional Facts

Proximate Composition (% DM)

Protein	Fiber	Ash	Moisture
22.39–39.91	3.66–5.19	10.10–11.11	8.15–9.45

Source: Data from Mondal et al. (2005).

Amino Acids (g/16 gN)

Isoleucine	4.5
Leucine	9.3
Valine	7.9
Lysine	5.9
Phenylalanine	4.2
Tyrosine	1.7
Methionine	0.6
Cysteine	0.7
Threonine	4.9
Alanine	12.2
Arginine	5.8
Aspartic acid	8.8
Glutamic acid	10.5
Glycine	10.4
Histidine	1.7
Proline	5.0
Serine	5.2

Source: Data from Becker (1994).

***Prasiola japonica* Yatabe 1891**



Order: Prasiolales

Family: Prasiolaceae

Common name: River nori.

Distribution: Asia: China, Japan (AlgaeBase).

Habitat: Freshwater habitat, river streams.