

Nutrient stoichiometry of fishes and invertebrates in coastal marine Caribbean ecosystems

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Citation: Allgeier, J. E. 2021. Nutrient stoichiometry of fishes and invertebrates in coastal marine Caribbean ecosystems. *Ecology* 102(12):e03533. 10.1002/ecy.3533

Abstract. The importance of animals for mediating ecosystem processes has long been recognized by ecologists. Traditionally, consumer-mediated dynamics have been considered through consumptive pathways such as predation and herbivory. Yet, consumers also play critical roles in mediating “bottom-up” pathways associated with nutrient dynamics. Foundational research demonstrated the importance of these dynamics in terrestrial, freshwater, and pelagic marine ecosystems, and introduced novel perspectives on the role of animals such as wildebeest, lacustrine fishes, and zooplankton, respectively, for providing an important source of nutrients that limit primary production. This research inspired a substantial body of research on the importance of consumer-mediated nutrient dynamics for ecosystem function. Despite this, only recently have ecologists begun to extend this line of thinking toward coastal marine ecosystems. The data presented herein is a comprehensive study of consumer nutrient dynamics from invertebrates and fishes that live in subtropical and tropical Caribbean coastal marine waters, including mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs. This data set represents the largest, to my knowledge, published nutrient stoichiometry data set from a single system, including estimates of excretion rates ($n = 900$ individuals total; $n = 667$ individual fish, size range 0.14–2,597 g [2–107 cm]; $n = 233$ invertebrates, size range 0.04–487 g), and somatic nutrient content analyses ($n = 658$ individuals total, $n = 494$ vertebrates, $n = 164$ invertebrates). These data also include $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ stable isotopes of whole body, body mass (wet mass), taxonomic identification to class-level, and functional group classification. These data have been used to test basic ecological theory, to scale individual-level processes to coral reef, mangrove, and seagrass ecosystems, and to understand the role of human impacts for mitigating consumer-mediated nutrient dynamics. While these findings have helped improve our understanding of nutrient dynamics in tropical coastal ecosystems, these data offer a wealth of additional promise for advancing ecological theory and applied science in tropical marine ecosystems and beyond. Users are free to use and analyze the data. Attribution should be given to this presentation of the data.

Key words: *body chemistry; body size; coral reef; ecological stoichiometry; invertebrate; mangrove; nitrogen excretion; phosphorus excretion; seagrass; vertebrate.*

The complete data set is available as Supporting Information at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ecy.3533>.

Manuscript received 19 January 2021; revised 29 April 2021; accepted 22 June 2021; final version received 1 September 2021.
Corresponding Editor: William K. Michener.

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