

**THE ROLE OF SESARMID CRABS IN THE MINERALIZATION OF LEAF LITTER OF *Rhizophora apiculata* IN A MANGROVE, SOUTHERN THAILAND**

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**ABSTRACT**

Data of leaf fall within 28 weeks are reported from a mangrove forest at Ao Nambor, Phuket, Thailand. The analysis of foregut contents of five species of sesarmid crabs indicates that they are primarily herbivores. Consumption rate experiments and preference rate experiments in aquaria showed that brown and green leaves were preferred food sources for sesarmid crabs. Leaf removal by sesarmid crabs in mangrove forest indicated very large variations in feeding activity. Chemical composition of green, yellow and brown leaves of *Rhizophora apiculata* were analysed.