

Clam fishery in Chunnambar estuary of Puducherry

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Chunnambar estuary situated about 8 km from Puducherry receives its freshwater inflow during monsoon season from Varahanadhi, a tributary of Palar River and meets the Bay of Bengal. During the observation period, the water temperature and salinity in this shallow estuary ranged from 25 - 33 °C and salinity 20 - 28 ppt respectively.

This estuary is rich in the backwater clam, *Meretrix casta* which supports the livelihood of fisherfolks from Nonankuppam, Ariyankuppam, Pooranankuppam and Pudhukuppam villages nearby. The clam fishery is distributed up to a stretch about 3 km. Nearly 50 fishers are engaged in clam exploitation. They follow traditional hand picking method with female fishers working in the shallow areas while male fishers exploit clam from 2-3 feet depth. Clam fishing is carried out throughout the year except during unfavourable conditions. Generally, clam picking activities starts early in the morning and carried out for about 3-5 hours each day. Each fisher can collect about 20-30 kg of clam in a day. Harvested clams are sold in the local markets and tourist centres in Puducherry at

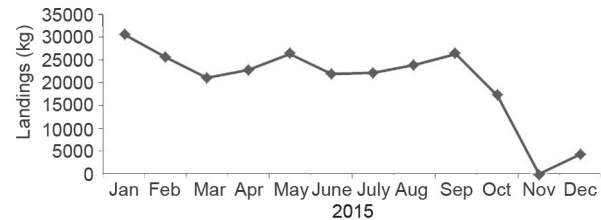


Fig. 1. Monthly estimated landings of clams at Chunnambar estuary

the rate of ₹ 10 per kg. On an average the male fishers get around ₹ 250 while female fishers can earn around ₹ 175 per day. Total estimated clam exploitation from Chunnambar estuary during January to December 2015 (Fig. 1) was 243 tonnes (t). During the month of November and December, 2015 exploitation took place only for a few days due to heavy rains in this region. The estimated catch of clam in this estuary was about 789 kg per day with the estimated average monthly exploitation of clam being 20.3 t. *M. casta* of 15 to 44 mm length and 0.5-33g weight were observed.