

Emerging fishery for Japanese ruby fish in Vizhinjam

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Unique catch of Japanese ruby fish, *Erythrocles schlegelii* (Richardson, 1846) locally known as *Imbooraan* occurred at Vizhinjam Landing Centre for the last few months. A demersal fish (family Emmelichthyidae) they are commonly known as ruby fishes, rovers, bonnet mouths and redbaits. Marine plywood boats fitted with two 9.9 HP engines are operating hooks and line to exploit these fishes. Daily trips with fishermen departing early at 3.00 am from the shore, travelling about 20-25 km to operate at more than 100 m depths and reaching back by 3.00 pm in the afternoon is common. *Erythrocles schlegelii* occurring as a regular fishery along Indian coast has not been reported earlier. The rare landing of the Japanese ruby fish at Veravel was reported (Swatipriyanka, 2014 *Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv. T&E Ser.*, 222:12). In Vizhinjam, this fishery started from 2015 onwards and contributed steadily to the fish landings of the centre. The peak landings were during December to April period and the catch per unit varied from 5 - 10 kg. The fishery was supported by juveniles and adults whose total length (TL) ranged from 90 to 560 mm and the total weight



Erythrocles schlegelii sold at Vizhinjam Landing Centre ranged from 40 g to 1.45 kg. The normal average market price per kg of the ruby fish varied from ₹ 80 to 100 per kilogram. The catch is auctioned directly at the landing centre by fish merchants and women vendors for domestic sale. Being an emerging fishery resource, initially the consumer demand was very poor but consumer acceptance is picking up.