Emerging fishery for Japanese ruby fish in Vizhinjam

Ambarish P. Gop, S. Surya, K. K. Suresh, H. Jose Kingsly, N. K. Midhunraj and M. K. Anil
Vizhinjam Research Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Vizhinjam
e-mail: gopidas.ambarish@gmail.com

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 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.

The seasonal hand line fishery for yellowfin tuna at Colachel

M. Sivadas, A. Margaret Muthu Rathinam, S. Mohan and R. Vasu
Madras Research Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Chennai
e-mail: sivadasmadhav@yahoo.com

In Tamil Nadu, the oceanic tunas like skipjack and yellowfin tuna are exploited mainly by multiday drift gill netters. However, in Colachel, Kanyakumari, there is a seasonal fishery targeting yellowfin tuna of medium size weighing around 30 kg, with hand lines that are operated from multiday trawlers. This is an additional income for both the fishermen and the trawl boat owners.

The main season is from February to April. Hand line with hooks (Hook Size Numbers 7-8) are...
operated akin to pole and line and trolling, usually in the early morning. The non-edible fish by-catch from the previous day’s trawling is used as bait for the operations. Once the tunas are located, the fish by-catch is broadcast into the sea and along with it the hand line is also dropped into the water while the boat keeps moving slowly. The line is pulled in once the tuna is hooked. The fishing ground is within the shelf area only and the tunas are found near the surface. Tunas of an average size of 114 cm Fork Length (FL) either in fully mature stage or in partially spent condition are caught. This clearly indicates presence of spawning shoals and that February-April probably is a major spawning season. Many tunas had stomachs replete with juvenile ribbon fish which was actually the by-catch broadcast into the sea which shows that these tunas were in search of food. The mode of fishing without baits hung on the hooks and hand lines operated from the trawlers without any additional modification is unusual. The flesh of these tunas were not of Sashimi grade. They were subsequently and degutted, their gills removed, cleaned thoroughly with water, packed in ice and sent to the processing plant for further preservation in -40°C, for exporting.

Emerging clam fishery in Muthalapozhi Estuary

P. Gomathi¹, M. K. Anil¹, P. K. Raheem¹, B. Raju¹ and Geetha Sasikumar²

¹Vizhinjam Research Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram
²Mangalore Research Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mangaluru.

e-mail: gomathimfsc@gmail.com

Muthalapozhi Estuary is located in northern part of Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala. Perunguzhi and Azhoor are commercial bivalve landing centers located along the Muthalapozhi Estuary, where large-scale clam exploitation has emerged during the recent past (Fig. 1). This new development is due to the increased domestic demand for clams in Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra consequent to the decreased availability of clams in their traditional local clam fishing grounds.

Fishery commenced from 2016 after some fish merchants from Kollam and Kozhikode visited the area and found out from the local fishermen that good clam beds are available in the estuary. Today, more than 350 fishermen including women are actively involved in the clam fishery that exploit the rich clam beds by hand picking and hand dredging. Agents from Kollam and Kozhikode Districts are procuring the harvested clams from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts and transporting them to Karnataka where the clams are conditioned and repacked for marketing in Goa and Maharashtra.

Active fishing is being carried out in the backwater area from Azhoor to Perunguzhi, a stretch of about 1.5 km. Physico-chemical parameters of the estuarine water indicated temperature of 30°C, salinity 23-31 (psu) and pH 8.1. Maximum