

Japanese fish emerges in Kerala waters

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Kochi: Fishermen in and around Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam are excited as a new fish is being caught off Kerala's coast in a certain time period over the past two years. The new fish that has excited them is the Japanese ruby fish (*Erythrocleschlegelii*) – called Imbooraan in local parlance – which is brought to Vizhinjam's landing centre.

Interestingly, this fish has not been reported in India, except once at Veraval in Gujarat in 2013.

Fish experts said that the deep sea fish had formed a habitat along Vizhinjam's coast and constitutes a sizeable part of the total landings in the region.

According to officials at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), agency survey teams have been



Japanese ruby fish caught off Kerala's coast

noting that this is one of the most-landed fishes in Vizhinjam on some days. Hook and line is the major gear used to catch the fish.

“There is no scientific record of the fish being reported along the Indian coast. This is the first report that says there is a habitat. For the past couple of years, it is caught regularly from Decem-

ber to April. A rare landing of Japanese ruby fish totalling 40kg was reported in 2013 at Veraval. In Vizhinjam, the catch began in 2015 and contributed steadily to the total landings here. The major season for peak landings is these winter months. The catch per unit varies from 5-10 kg,” said CMFRI scientist at Vizhinjam Ambarish P Gopidas.

As the fishing is done using non-mechanized gear, the normal catch per unit is low. Fishermen said there were quite a few takers for Imbooraan as it had become a regular in the local market. An adult fish weighs 1.5kg and the average market price varies from Rs 80-Rs 100 per kg. It depends on the total catch. Some days the price even touched Rs 200 per kg.

However, after the recent cyclone Ockhi, there has been a drop in the catch as fishermen haven't started venturing into the sea for longer periods of time.