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Size Composition, Condition Cycle and Maturation in *Paphia Malabarica* (Chemnitz) in Ashtamudi Lake

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Paphia malabarica is an important clam species which has formed vast beds in the Ashtamudi estuary. They are exploited here commercially for local as well as export markets due to heavy demand. The study was undertaken to assess catch trends, catch and effort, size composition, condition index, percentage edibility and maturation of *P. malabarica* of this estuary for one year. The estimated production of this clam during March to November 2013 was 10907.3 tonnes and compared to 2012 showed a decrease of 2.4% (266.6 t). The estimated annual catch rate of shell-on clam was 243 kg. Recruitment to the fishery was observed during June and December month. The largest *Paphia* clams were obtained in November. The breeding season was from October to February, with peak spawning in November. The male and female sex ratio was found to be 1:1. Increased biomass production and percentage edibility were recorded highest during the monsoon season (June – October) indicating the best time for harvest to keep the fishery sustainable. A rapid decline was observed in the percentage edibility values from November onwards. Higher percentage edibility was recorded in April and November indicating high quality of clam meat. Maximum condition index was observed in May and November. There was not much difference in the size at maturity (Lm) for females and males. Lm was estimated to be 20mm for females.

