

Occurrence of hammer oyster in the Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu

Malleus malleus (Linnaeus, 1758) is the species of black hammer oysters coming under the order Pterioida, family Malleidae. *Malleus* genus is characterized by hammer shaped outline of the valves which are nearly equivalved; hinge line extremely long and at nearly perpendicular to the rest of the valves. Generally found in clean sandy bottom of intertidal areas in which hinge lines are buried while the most distal regions are projecting

outside the sandy bottom, it is also found in coral reef areas. In the present case, this species were by-catch from seagrass beds off the Veerapandi pattinam at Gulf of Mannar as epifaunal organisms. Length of the specimen ranged between 165-190 mm with a hinge line upto 113 ± 18 mm. Black hammer oysters is the longest among all the hammer oysters. Maximum shell length recorded was 220 mm. During the late seventies

to early eighties diversification of traditional fishing methods to exploit near shore fish and shrimps such as “*Thallumadi*” (modified version of the shrimp trawl) and “*Disconet*” (an improvised drift gill net) was recorded in Gulf of Mannar . Black hammer oysters are caught as by-catch during *Thallumadi* operations here which was used in the lime industry according to local fishers In the ancient days, hammer oysters were highly prized by collectors with sale of *M. malleus* recorded for 240 francs in Paris and 32 guilders in Holland during the 18th century (Dance, 1966). Awareness needs to be created among the workers of shell craft industry regarding the utilization of this potential raw material for decorative purpose rather than in lime industry.

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Fig.1. External view of the adult *M. malleus*



Fig.2. Internal view of the adult *M. malleus*