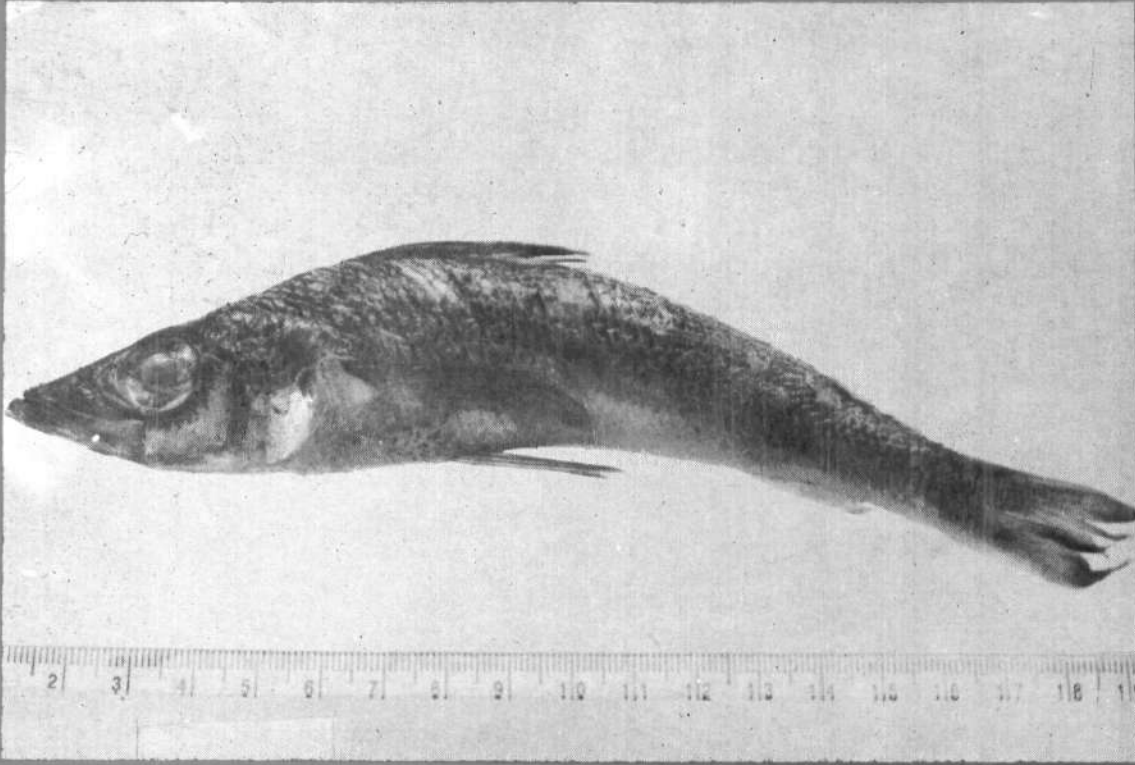




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INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Fishery of the Painted Crayfish *Panulirus versicolor* in the Gulf of Mannar*

The Painted crayfish *Panulirus versicolor* (Latreille) is widely distributed in the Indo-West Pacific region (George, 1973, *Proc. Symp. Living Resources of the seas around India*). Although it has been reported to occur in the Indian waters on both the east and west coasts it does not contribute significantly to the commercial fishery in any part of the coasts (Kagwade *et al.*, 1991, *J. mar. biol. Ass. India*). During our regular observations on the lobster fishery off Kayalpattinam and Tharuvaikulam near Tuticorin on the southeast coast

of Tamil Nadu we noticed sporadic landing of this species along with *P. ornatus* and *P. homarus*, which constitute the commercial lobster fishery of that region.

Data on the catch of *P. versicolor* landed at Kayalpattinam and Tharuvaikulam centres were collected during the period 1985-'89 and 1991-'92 respectively. The fishing operation was carried out mostly in the shallow waters at a depth range of about 5 to 10 metres from plank-built boats using bottom-set gill nets with a mesh size of 85-90 mm.

The number size and sex of *P.versicolor* landed on the observation days, were recorded and the same are given in Table 1. The data showed that the landing of this species was sporadic throughout the period of observation. Only during 1985 it was observed for a maximum period of six months from July to December. During the subsequent year it was observed in January and then after a break of seven months it appeared in the catch from September to November. During the rest of the years the landing of this species was observed from one to three months only. The size of *P. versicolor* landed during the entire period of observation ranged from 131 to 230 mm in male with maximum numbers in the size range of 201-240 mm (47.7%). In the female the size ranged from 152 to 248 mm with maximum numbers in the size range of 181 - 220 mm (58.4%). Out of 33 numbers observed during the entire period of observation, 21 numbers (63.6%) were males.

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TABLE 1. Size ranges in *P. versicolor* landed by bottom-set gill nets at Kayalpattnam and Tharuvaikulam centres during the years 1985-92

Year	Month	Male			Female		
		Nos. observed	Size range (mm)		Nos. observed	Size range (mm)	
			Min.	Max.		Min.	Max.
1985	Jul.	2	158	233	—	—	—
	Aug.	1	177	—	—	—	—
	Sep.	1	194	—	—	—	—
	Oct.	—	—	—	1	185	—
	Nov.	1	221	—	3	208	220
	Dec.	1	204	—	2	173	235
1986	Jan.	1	227	—	—	—	—
	Sep.	1	144	—	—	—	—
	Oct.	1	147	—	—	—	—
	Nov.	1	144	—	—	—	—
1987	Feb.	2	219	236	—	—	—
	Apr.	1	239	—	2	199	248
1988	Jul.	—	—	—	1	152	—
	Aug.	1	165	—	1	165	—
	Dec.	2	161	205	2	183	201
1989	May	1	146	—	—	—	—
1991	Sep.	1	131	—	—	—	—
1992	Mar.	1	190	—	—	—	—
	Apr.	1	203	—	—	—	—
	May	1	228	—	—	—	—