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Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute

(Indian Council of Agricultural Research)

Post Box No. 1603, Cochin - 682 018, Kerala, India

WWW.cmfri.org.in

On the mass mortality of triggerfish *Odonus niger* (Rupell) along Dhanuskodi coast

BINDU SULOCHANAN, V. VENKATESAN, N. RAMAMURTHY AND A. GANDHI

Mandapam Regional Centre of CMFRI, Mandapam Camp

On 3rd and 4th October 2007, several fishes of the species *Odonus niger* (locally known as Karuppu Klaathi) were washed ashore along the coast for a stretch of nearly 4 km from Dhanuskodi check post to Arichumunai. On an average, 60 fishes were found lying in every 15 m of the stretch.



Fig. 1. Live fish among the dead covered with parasitic copepod *Caligus*

Estimated total number of dead fishes were 16,000. Some fishes were washed ashore by the waves in half dead condition (Fig. 1). On close examination of the live specimen, it was noticed that the skin and gills are covered with parasites. Crustacean parasite was identified as copepod of the genus *Caligus* (Fig. 2). Analysis of water sample from the area



Fig. 2. Parasitic copepod belonging to the genus *Caligus*

showed a pH of 8.21, dissolved oxygen 4.91ml / l, salinity 34.9 ppt, chlorophyll 0.442 mg/m³ and ammonia was below detection level. There was no algal bloom observed in the area. The dead fishes had immature gonads. *O. niger* is known to reach a length of 600 mm. The length range of dead fishes recorded in this region was 80-100 mm. The species

is observed in the landings of trawlers at Rameswaram and Pamban landing centres as a by-catch. This group of fishes might be discarded by the fishermen in the area as it has no commercial value. Due to the high waves in Dhanuskodi region towards the shore, fishes might have died as it was not able to move back to the reef area.