

## ICAB CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH TATAPURAM P.O. COCHIN-682 014 1996

# MARINE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Edited by

N.G. Menon and C.S.G. Pillai



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#### **PREFACE**

Conservation and sustained development of natural living resources and environmental protection have been the focus of extensive, scholarly attention in recent times. This has been the subject of debate and concern of all ecofriendly people the world over in the last decades of the 20th century. The diverse use of coastal and oceanic habitats for fishing, oil & gas, energy, tourism, education and research has naturally generated significant capital returns. This has also resulted in increased competition over ocean and coastal space and resources. Many believe that unbridled trade-based growth in this sector has resulted in the overexploitation of natural resources. In many countries conflicts between different interest groups have been reported with grave social, economic and political implications. In India also similar problems are often reported. Therefore, there is growing awareness among the beneficiaries and user agencies of this sector on the imperative need to conserve, protect and manage the various ecosystems and their valuable living resources. Considering the priority of this problem, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has been conducting various multidisciplinary research projects for developing appropriate strategies over the last five decades to facilitate rational exploitation, conservation and management of the diverse exploited marine living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone as part of its charter of activities. The research results have revealed that consistently intensive exploitation, especially in the shallow coastal waters, has led to habitat and biodiversity degradation, species replacement and even overharvest of a few vulnerable species. Many strategic ecosystems such as the coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, estuaries, backwaters, salt marshes and lagoons have also been subjected to intense exploitation, often resulting in serious damages to these life supporting systems. The results of ecological, biological and environmental studies conducted on these habitats are unfolding the magnitude and dimension of the problems. Based on these studies the Institute could propose many regulatory measures and also recommend the declaration of certain vulnerable ecosystems as National Parks and Biosphere Reserves. It is hoped that the Institute's findings would be put to proper use for policy decisions leading to appropriate action. Large scale reclamation of estuarine and brackishwater areas, dredging, bottom trawling and domestic and industrial pollution constitute the major activities resulting in the progressive degradation of habitats and biodiversity in the coastal regions.

A wide range of resource and environment issues of coastal fisheries, aquaculture and mariculture including their problems and prospects are dealt with in this publication on the basis of the data generated within the Institute over the past few decades. Other relevant literature has also been taken into account, where necessary. The objective of this book is to indicate several management regimes and options to the various users of coastal zone to help them protect the marine habitats and resources, and also to create awareness among them on such threats as: (1) marine habitat modification and destruction; (2) overexploitation of fisheries resources; (3) erosion of species/genetic diversity; 4) anthropogenic modification of species relationships; (5) pollution hazards and (6) dredging and reclamation of natural life supporting systems.

The various chapters have been written by the concerned specialists and postgraduate students of this Institute, and I am thankful to them for presenting the subject matter very lucidly so that the central theme could percolate down to the grassroot level without any difficulty.

January 15, 1996

M. Devaraj

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