A note on the exploitation of starfish *Protoreaster lincki* (Echinodermata: Asteroidea) in Tuticorin

*Protoreaster lincki*, commonly called red general star or red spined star is a beautiful, decorative species, which is relatively larger in size up to 30 cm, with five short triangular arms having bright red or orange reticulate pattern on the dorsal side.

Distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific region as a sand or sea grass bed dweller, this species is never encountered in intertidal areas. It is considered as a voracious scavenger, mainly feed on sponges, sea anemones, soft corals etc. It is an enemy of pearl oysters along the Gulf of Mannar area. This species attracted the attention of aquarium keepers because of its bold shape and bright colours.

At Tuticorin, this species is being collected and processed in huge quantities, mainly for ornamental purpose and also for curios along Kalavasal area. It is informed that these are mainly collected by the skin divers engaged in chank fishing during off-season and sells at a cost of Rs.1 - 1.50/- per piece depending on the size. After collection, the specimens are washed thoroughly in seawater to remove adhering sand and other extraneous particle and sun dried (Fig.1). Some traders are giving formic acid treatment before drying to avoid off odor, while storage and also to retain the colour and beauty for long time. The dried starfish is procured by the vendors from Kanyakumari, Rameswaram, Keezhakarai and Chennai at Rs.2-3/- per piece. Per day an average of 200-300 pieces are being collected during peak season and is considered as cheap but

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profitable business.

Like other echinoderms, starfishes constitute a major marine benthic community having significant impacts on community structure. At present starfishes are not included in the list of threatened fauna. So far no stock assessment has been carried out to study the abundance of the species along Gulf Mannar area. The possibility of over exploitation of this species along with its habitat destruction by coral mining warrants the initiation of conservation measures and also to study its impacts on ecosystem.

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**1167 Whale shark, *Rhincodon typus* landed at Mandapam, Gulf of Mannar**

On 11.01.2006, a male whale shark, *Rhincodon typus* measuring 8.2m in length and approximately 3 tonnes in weight was caught in pair trawl net operated 30 kms away from the shore in Gulf of Mannar at a depth of 55m. It was brought to the shore at Mandapam landing centre around 10 hrs. As the whale shark is an endangered species the matter was informed the Ranger Office, Gulf of Mannar project, Mandapam camp for further action.

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**Book Review**

**Title: Evolution of Fisheries and Aquaculture in India**

Authors: N.G.K. Pillai and Pradeep K. Katiha

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The fisheries sector plays a pivotal role in global economics through generation of wealth and employment potential for an ever-increasing population. This sector in India contributes significantly towards the above human needs with an annual turn over of above Rs.220 billion forming 1.4%