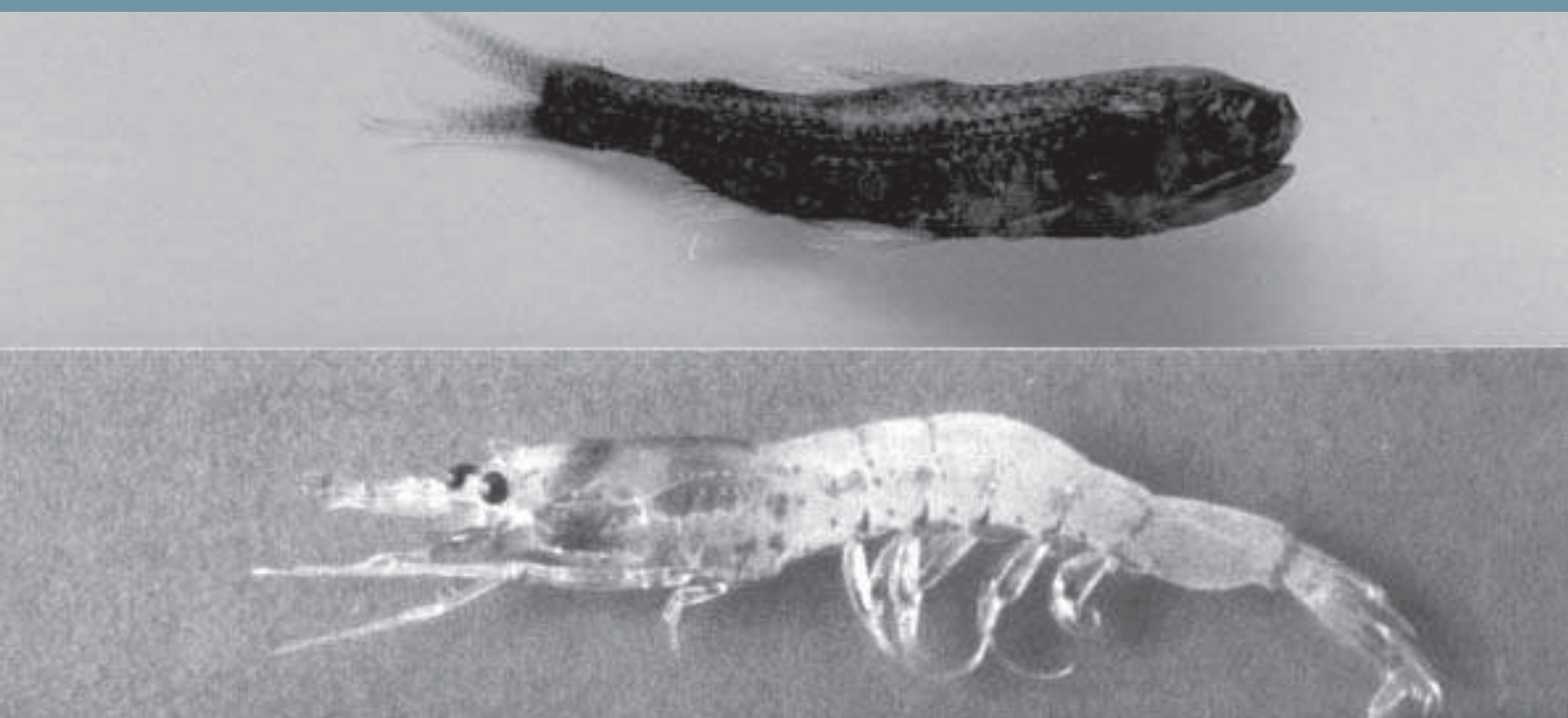




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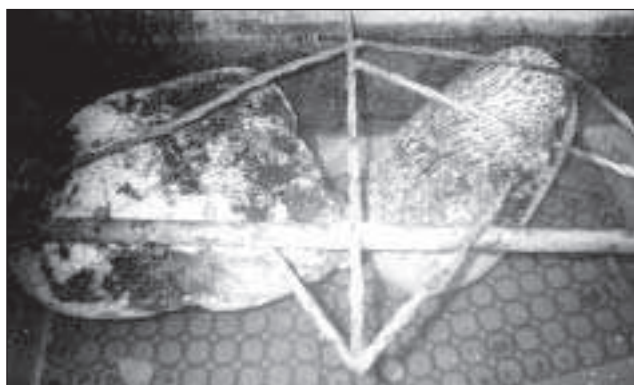
(INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH)

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An interesting note on floating corals

It is believed that a floating stone kept near the fire faced Hanuman temple in Rameshwaram was one of the stones used to build the legendary bridge in Ramayana between India and Srilanka.

The floating stone on a closer examination reveals that it is a coral. Corals of the genus *Favia*, *Platygyra* etc. are kept floating in a tank filled with water. This is in conformity with the massive floating coral belonging



water is replaced by air'. Hiraya Yamano, a Japanese scientist has also come across such kind of floating corals in high latitude reefs. He believes that the low calcification rate in high latitudes contributed to this phenomenon. According to him, the high turbidity in the tropics reduces the calcification rate which may be the reason for the low specific gravity of the floating corals. The coral belonging to the genus *Favia* which



Corals floating in a tank in Rameswaram

to the genus *Favia* kept floating in the aquarium at Mandapam Regional Center of CMFRI. According to Terry Hughes (personal communication) the scientific explanation for this is as follows : 'Coral skeletons are not solid, they have many holes or cavities that are usually filled with water. The size and number of cavities determines the skeletal density (specific gravity) of a coral, which varies from 0.9 to >2gm/cc. Tall corals need to be more dense to stop them breaking, whereas massive corals like *Favia* and *Platygyra* are less dense. Corals less than 1gm/cc will float if most of the

has been kept floating in CMFRI aquarium is obtained from the seashore adjacent to the institute. It looks a fossilized form with many cavities and crevices. With the help of radiocarbon dating the age of this coral can be exactly determined. Also this kind of radiocarbon studies on corals and floating chronologies are widely used in predicting the past sea level and sea surface temperatures. So the floating coral is of great scientific significance.

Reported by : Sandhya Sukumaran & C. Kasinathan, Mandapam Regional Centre of CMFRI, Mandapam Camp