

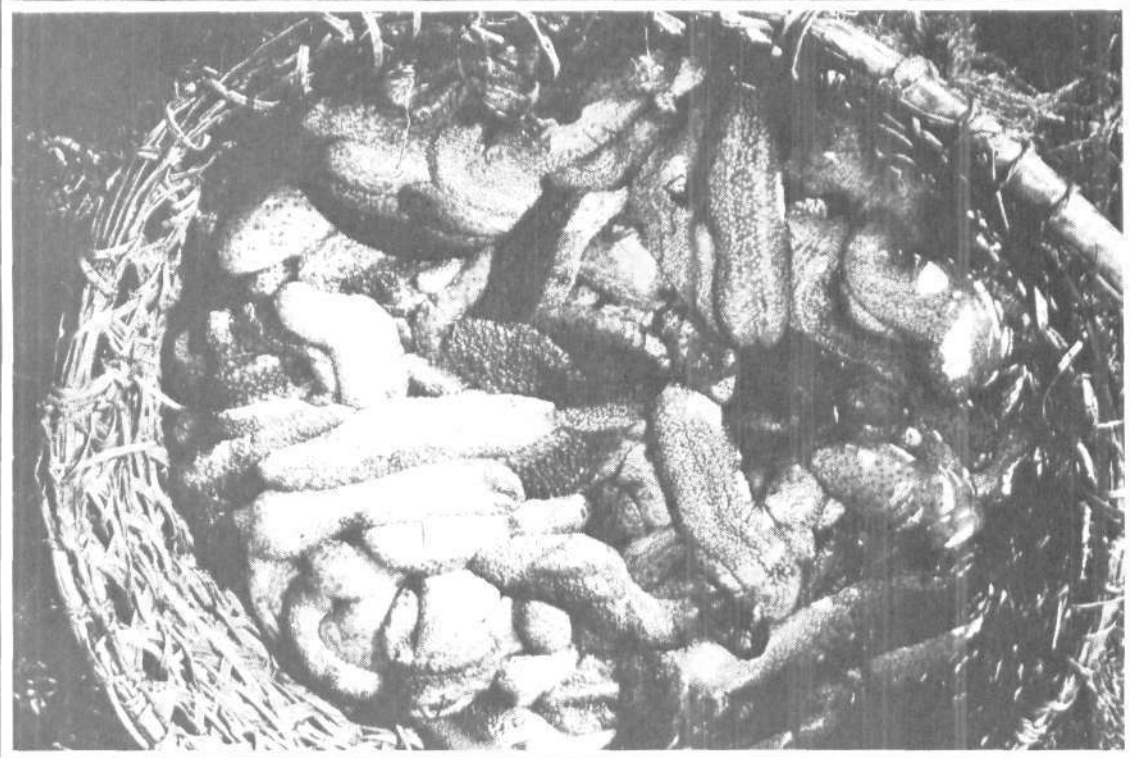


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Note on seasonal fishery of *Holothuria (Metriatyla) scabra* Jaeger from Pamban Island*

Introduction

Out of the nearly 200 species of sea cucumber known from the seas around India, about 75 species are reported from the shallow waters of the Indian coast. Of these about 12 species are commercially important. *Holothuria scabra* locally called as 'Vella attai' is the dominant species exploited by fishermen by skin diving in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar. This species is landed almost throughout the year, in places like Thiruppalaikudi, Devipattinam, Mandapam and Rameswaram in the Palk Bay and Vedalai, Periapattinam and Kilakkarai in the Gulf of Mannar. This note gives the details of a new seasonal fishery from the Pamban Island.

Fishery

During July - October 1995, *H. scabra* was landed at Sangumal fish landing centre in the Pamban Island in fair quantities. About 200 divers from Periapattinam, Kilakkarai and Rameswaram participated in the fishing with 17 boats. Fishermen usually leave in the morning between 8 and 9 hours to the fishing ground and return with catches in the afternoon by 1500 hours. The collection of sea cucumber is mostly done by skin diving using masks when the sea waters is very clear without turbidity. The fishery started in the second week of July and continued till the first week of October. In the second week of August the estimated catch per fishermen was between 50 and 75 numbers, but the fishery picked up in middle of August and the catch amounted to 150-200 numbers per fishermen and this trend continued upto the second week of September. The catch declined in the first week of October and the fishing was closed in the second week of October. Small numbers of *H. spinifera* were also noticed in the landing. Since the sea condition used to be is very congenial (calm sea) during this period, major activity of skin diving is done for holothurian during this period.

Fishing ground

The fishing ground (Fig. 1) is in the Palk Bay side of Pamban Island, about 1 to 2 km from seashore at the depth of 3 to 5 metres from Kariayur fishing village to Danushkodi pier parallel to sea shore. The nature of bottom is muddy and sandy with extensive growth of sea grasses, which is considered to be a productive fishing ground for holothurians. During the period of observation, holothurians which yielded 6.5 tonnes of dried products were landed at Sangumal landing centre. The sea cucumber ranged in length from 110 to 260 mm and weighed from 145 to 600 g in fresh condition. The size groups of 140 and 170 mm contributed to the major fishery.

Mode of disposal

Usually as soon as the catch is landed, the holothurians are taken to the purchasing centre in aluminium buckets along with sea water. (Figs. 2 & 3).

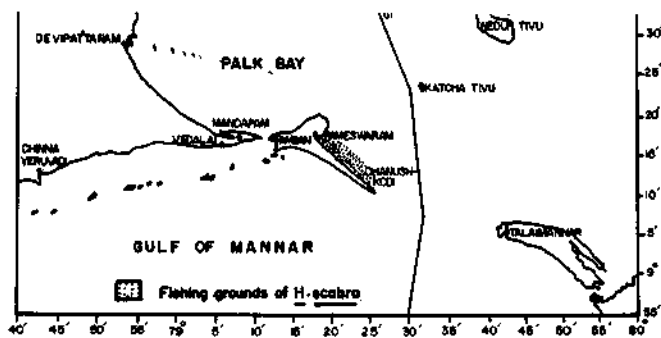


Fig-1. Map showing the area in Palk Bay where *H. scabra* is fished.



Fig-2. A heap of holothurians at the purchasing centre.



Fig-3. Holothurians brought to the purchasing centre in aluminium buckets.

About 60% of the catch is taken to Periapattinam and Kilakkarai in mini motor van for processing and the remaining are processed at Rameswaram. The sea cucumbers are purchased by the processor by numbers. The price of a single sea cucumber range from Rs. 6 to 12. The processed and dried product is sold at the rate of Rs. 95.0/- to 140.0/- per kg to the agents depending on the size. Majority of the processed sea cucumbers are sent to the dealers at Kilakkarai and Chennai and from Chennai they are exported to Singapore.

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