

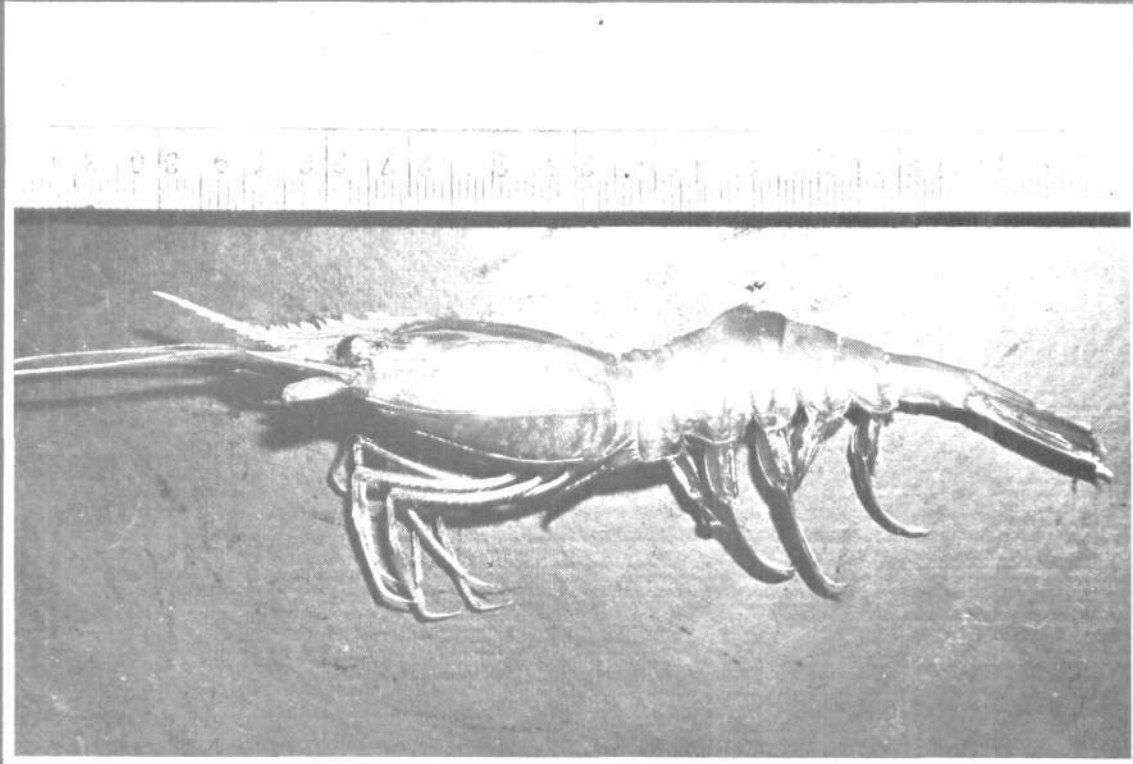


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Trichodesmium* bloom and mortality of *Canthigaster margaritatus* in the Lakshadweep sea

During the cruise No. 140 of FORV *Sagar Sampada* (3-4-1996 to 16-4-1996), a thick bloom of *Trichodesmium erythraeum* was observed between lat. 12°30'N and 14°30'N and long: 72°E and 74°E during the third week of April 1996 (Fig. 1). Large scale mortality of single species of fish, *Canthigaster margaritatus* was also noticed over a submerged reef area at 13°30'N and 72°29'E (Stn. No. 3424) during this period.



Fig. 1. *Trichodesmium* bloom off Lakshadweep.

On detailed examination, the bloom samples were found to contain *Noctiluca miliaris* and *Rhizosolenia calcaravis*. In the area where fish mortality occurred was characterized by low levels of dissolved oxygen (1.90 ml/l) and high levels of phosphate (1.84 µg at/l). The surface temperature and salinity measured were 29°C and 34.4 ppt respectively.

Information gathered from the Lakshadweep Islands disclosed that by the end of April 1996 the bloom of *Trichodesmium* moved further south and reached 10°N and the mortality of *C. margaritatus* also occurred in almost all the northern Islands and the dead fish were washed ashore. The gut content studies conducted on tunas at Androth Island (10°49'N & 73°41'E) during the first and second week of May 1996 revealed the presence of large numbers of *C. margaritatus* and the meat of such tunas became soft in just 2-3 hours after the capture.

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