

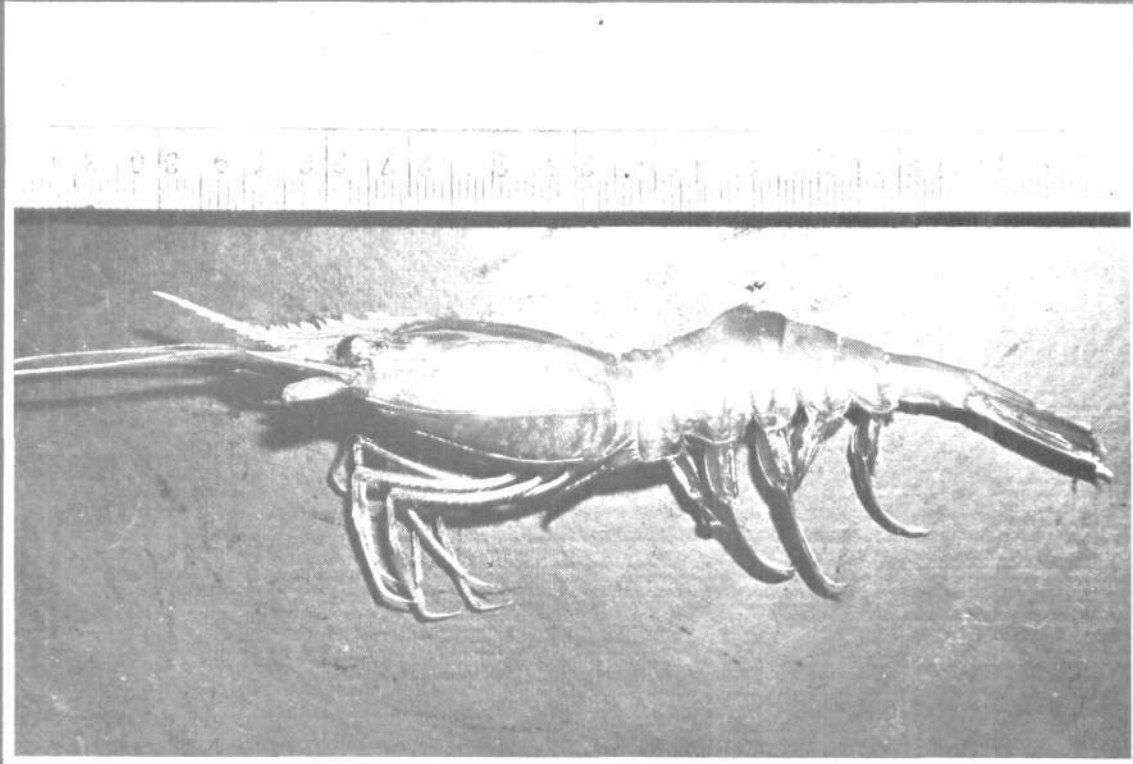


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A note on whelk (*Babylonia* spp.) fishery in Pondicherry*

Whelk meat is being exported from India to Japan and Singapore since 1994. Due to its increasing demand, coastal fishermen of Pondicherry and the districts of Villupuram and Cuddalore (South Arcot) are now exploiting two species of *Babylonia*. (*B. spirata* and *B. zeylanica*), locally known as 'Puramuttai' or 'Kozhichank' in good quantities since December 1995. Presented in this note is a brief account of the whelk fishery in Pondicherry.

Method of fishing

Catamarans with or without outboard engine are the crafts used for whelk fishing in these areas. The ring net locally called 'nandukatcha' which is normally used for crab fishing is slightly modified for whelk fishing. A longline with 75 to 85 ring nets are used for fishing. Cod end portion of old trawl net is used for making the ring net. The rings are made of 16 mm MS rod and the conical bag net is fixed to the rings. The bait is attached to 10 mm nylon rope across the ring. Ring nets are fixed on the main rope at equal intervals and the nets are operated for 6-10 hours. The bait used is decayed meat of rayfish or cuttlefish, to which whelks are attracted and

trapped in the ring net. Table 1 shows the average catch per unit of *Babylonia* at Pondicherry with the revenue realised.

TABLE 1. Catch and price details of whelk fishery in Pondicherry

Month	Average catch per unit per day (kg)	Price per kg. (with shell) (Rs.)	Income per fishermen per day (Rs.)
Mar. '95	18.5	12.00	37.00
Dec. '95	20.0	30.00	100.00
Jan. '96	35.0	30.00	175.00
Feb. '96	42.0	34.00	238.00
Mar. '96	14.0	36.00	84.00

Whelks are found in large number in inshore areas with muddy bottom at a depth ranging from 5-25 m. The whelk meat and operculum are exported. The shell is used locally for shell craft industry.

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