

Mandapam And Its Environs

SOUVENIR

Edited

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The Krusadai Island

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INTRODUCTION

The Krusadai island is located about 6 km from Mandapam in the Gulf of Mannar. It is one of the best known islands as it is rich in a variety of fauna.

The total area of the islands is 67 ha. located between 9° 14' N and 79° 13' E. The island is 2050 metres long and 700 metres wide. The South East part of the island is sandy while the northern part is muddy with marshy vegetations. The western part of the island is covered with mangroves. Extensive coral reefs extends to south eastern part of the island. The galaxy reef found on the southern side of the island is a very good area for collection and observation. The sponge bay is on the west of Galaxy reef. The Balanoglossus are found in the shallow areas west of sponge Bay.

Mr. James Hornell, the then Director of Fisheries and Sir Frederick Nicholson suggested the establishment of a Marine Biological Station at the Krusadai island in 1916. The station was established in 1922, with pearl oyster farm, Later a fish farm was also added.

PROCEDURE TO VISIT THE ISLAND

Though the number of college parties visiting the island has dwindled in recent years partly due to the change in the study curriculam and partly due to the depletion of the fauna of the island, the island offers ample scope for field collection experience to the students and to observe the animal life in their natural habitat.

The island had a Marine Biological Station housing a museum and a laboratory. The museum has a good collection of Marine animals from the island. Fisheries department staff give guidance to the student parties. Now the administrative office of the Research assistant, who controls the visit of the college parties to the island arranges the boat and supervise the field work of the student parties, is situated at Mandapam near the Mandapam Railway station. The visiting parties should write to the Assistant Director of Fisheries, (Marine Biology) Department of Fisheries, Fisheries aquarium, Marina, Madras - 600 005 atleast before a fortnight sending a copy of the letter directly to the Research Assistant, Krusadai Marine Biological Station, Mandapam- 623 520 Ramnad District., Tamilnadu for permission to visit the island. They should indicate in their letter date of their arrival at Mandapam, number of students and staff and the duration of their stay in the island. The Department of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu provides a 32 foot mechanised boat for the transport of the parties to the island at the cost of Rs. 160/- for the first four hours and Rs. 41/- for the subsequent hours. It can take about 30 persons at a time. The trip will take about 40 minutes to reach the island from Mandapam boat building yard. So if a party leaves Mandapam at 6 A.M. it can return by 2 P.M. It is better to return before 2 P.M. as the sea becomes rough in the evening. As no boarding facility is available at the island, it is better to carry food from the mainland.

WHEN TO VISIT THE ISLAND

The best time to visit the island is from January to April and September to October. Sea will be rough due to the South west wind during the months of May to August. It is better to

avoid the months of November and December due to cyclones and heavy rains experienced in these areas during this period.

A fair knowledge of tide is essential before organising the collection tours. The low tide period is good for observing the animals in their natural habitat. If the visit is arranged in the morning low tide period, the animals can be seen clearly. The tide table should be consulted to find suitable low tide period before fixing the programme.

COLLECTION OF ANIMALS

Many college parties visit the Island every year, some equipped with hammers, iron bars and other accessories. They can cause irreparable damage to the animal life. One of the main reasons for the depletion of animal life in the island is the 'collection' spree of the visiting college parties. In youthful enthusiasm the students collect specimens and discard them after the tour. The collected specimens will neither be intact nor properly preserved so as to be useful for study. It is mainly due to the faulty collection technique and the mode of preservation. For example if a beautiful Eunice or a flat worm is taken with forceps, it will break into pieces or if it is preserved directly in formalin or spirit it will disintegrate into bits. Most of the marine biological specimens require special techniques, for collection and preservation.

The teachers should spend time with the students in observing the animals in their natural habitat and request the students to study the behaviour of the animals and understand the beauty and sophistication attained by them in their own ways. Notes should be taken observing them rather than collecting the animals and depleting the stock. If we had taken care some of the rare specimens which were common in the island would not have got depleted. Now due to the depletion of animals collection of specimens by the college parties is banned.

Authentic publications are available on the fauna and flora of the island. Some of the important works are :

- GRAVELY, F. H. 1927. The littoral fauna of Krusadai Island in Gulf of Mannar. Decapoda and stomatopoda. *Bull. Madras Govt. Museum (N. S.), N. H. section* Vol. No. 1
- THURSTON, E. 1887. A Preliminary report on the marine fauna of Rameswaram and neighbouring island. Govt. Central *Mus. Madras Sci. Ser.* No. 141 pp.