

ACTIONOPYGA MILIARIS (QUOY & GAIMARD), A NEW RESOURCE OF SEA CUCUMBER DISCOVERED OFF TUTICORIN

Species of *Actinopyga* are valuable resource for the *Beche-de-mer* industry. Ten species are known from the shallow waters of the Indo-West Pacific region. Though five species are known from Sri Lanka, surprisingly no species is collected from the Indian side during the last one hundred years. In 1989, *Actinopyga echinites* was discovered off Krusadai, Mannali and Hare Islands in the Gulf of Mannar. Information on this new resource has been published (CMFRI Newsletter No. 49). In January, 92 yet another species *Actinopyga miliaris* closely allied to *A. echinites* is collected in large number off Tuticorin. Also a few specimens of *A. mauritiana* are collected from the Gulf of Mannar.

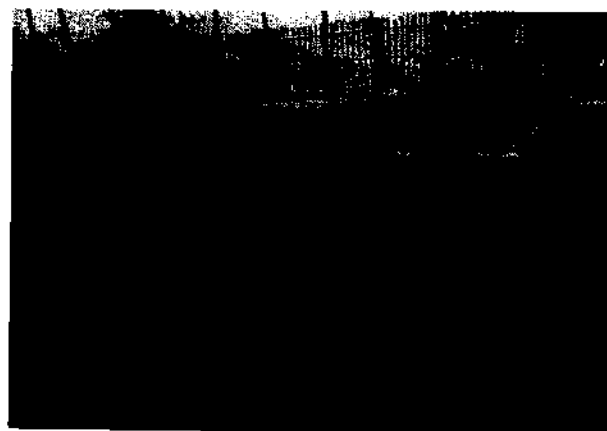


Fresh specimens of *A. miliaris*

The fishing grounds are located 10-12 kilometers from the Hare Island. The specimens are collected by divers at a depth of 20-30 metres. About 100-150 sail boats are engaged in fishing daily. On an average six persons go

for fishing in each boat. During the month of January, 40,000 and during February and March, 25,000 specimens were collected. The specimens ranged in length from 120-300 mm and weight varied from 150-1,150 in the fresh condition. Fresh specimens are sold at Rs. 3.00 to 4.50 and the processed material costs Rs. 100 to 150 per kg. In each kg, 15-20 specimens weigh depending on the size. The marine products Export Development Authority has fixed the price for one kg at 40 Singapore dollars.

As soon as the specimens are brought to the shore they are put in boiling sea water which is kept ready and boiled for one hour. The specimens are boiled without degutting. Then they are taken out and put on a mat. The next day, they are again boiled for an hour and then dried. The material takes four or five days to dry depending on the sun light. Material worth of five lakhs is processed in three months time.



Close up view of *A. miliaris* kept for drying