Heavy landings of yellowfin tuna *Thunnus albacares* (Bonnaterre, 1788) by hooks and line off Chennai coast

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Tunas are commercially important fish and widely but sparsely distributed throughout the oceans of the world, generally in tropical and temperate waters. They are grouped taxonomically in the family Scombridae, which includes about 50 species. The most important of these in commercial and recreational fisheries are yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) (Fig. 1), skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), bluefin tuna (*T. tonggol*), frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*), mackerel tuna (*Euthynnus affinis*) and striped bonito (*T. orientalis*). They are exploited mainly by hooks and line, mechanised gillnets and trawlnets in India. During January - March 2009, heavy landings of yellowfin tuna was observed at Chennai Fisheries Harbour and the catches were 15.0 t, 56.0 t and 73.5 t respectively. Maximum catch recorded on a single day was 5.5 t on 03.03.2009. Hooks and line were operated at a depth of 80-120 m in the north-east direction off Chennai. Yellowfin tuna formed 80-90% of the total catch whereas other catches included sailfish, carangids, seerfish and groupers. The tuna catch was auctioned at the rate of Rs. 80 per kg. Fishes were cleaned, gill rakers removed and degutted (Fig. 2). The cleaned fish were transported to Kerala for high value export market.

hooks and line fishery of cuttle fish from the artificial trap at Blangad, Thrissur

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About 300 fibre boats fitted with outboard engine are coming to Blangad Landing Centre from Tamil Nadu (Kollamgodu, Neerodi, Enayam, Thoothur and Muttam) for *Sepia* fishing during October - March
period. The type of gear used is hooks and line. At the end of a thread, four hooks (no.10) are attached and above the hooks, some weight wrapped with glittering silvery ribbon attached to attract the animal.

Traps are prepared to attract the cuttle fish. Thirty numbers of coconut spadix are tied together with a plastic rope (Fig.1). This unit is attached to sacks fitted with sand as weight to keep the spadix stand erect. This type of bundle units is placed at the bottom of the sea about 30 to 50 fathom depth. Each boat places 25 numbers of this type of artificial units at different parts of sea. GPS readings are also taken for the units. After 5 to 7 days, fishing is started using above mentioned type of hooks and line, from the artificial structure. It is during this period that the species is coming in large numbers towards the structure for laying eggs.

At this time, fishing starts using the above mentioned gear while the animal tries to bite glittering ribbon. The ribbon and then the thread in which the hooks are fitted, is dragged and the animal is trapped in the hook. Some of the boats earn about Rs.10,000 to rupees one lakh. The weight of each specimen ranged from 500 g to 2.5 kg. Price per kg is in range of Rs. 175 - 200/-.

Once the availability of sepia is reduced, new structures are erected at different locations. The cost of each coconut spadix ranges from Rs. 2.50 - 3.50. When enough coconut spadix are not available in Kerala, they are purchased from Tamil Nadu and brought in lorries. Most of the structures deposited in the sea, are being destroyed accidentally by trawlers.

Fishing of this type is resisted in areas like Kara and Kathiyalam in Thrissur District. Some boats which conducted this type of fishing, have been burnt at Kootai in Malapuram District. It is said that the availability of these species in trawlers, is badly affected or reduced due to this kind of exploitation.

Bumper catch of green mussel in Chettikulam, Calicut

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Malabar coast is the known hub of quality green mussel *Perna viridis*, L. Total bivalve landed along Kozhikode - Kannur coast during 2006 was estimated to 15682 t in which nearly 65% was contributed by the *Perna viridis* (Laxmilatha et al., 2007). Along the coast between Kozhikode and Chombala nearly 283 fulltime and 218 part time mussel pickers are engaged actively in exploiting mussels from the natural beds.

On 10th and 11th October 2010 a large number of villagers living near the coast in the age group of 5 to 65 years mostly women participated in the mussel picking on the rocky beaches of Chettikulam, near 10 km north of Kozhikode (Fig. 1). The sea receded miles away from the beach keeping exposed the laterite rocks for hours together in the evenings. The lowest low tide level on 10th October 2010 at 18.41 hrs was only 0.09 m. The quantity exploited on these days alone touched 600 kg and the size ranged from 50 to 80 mm.