

Harvest patterns of Black clam in the Vembanad Lake, Kerala

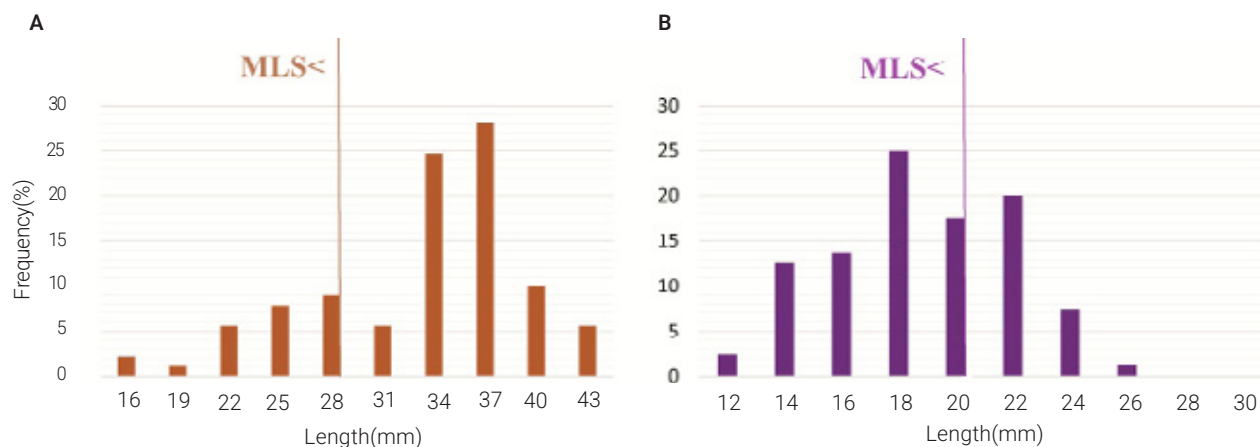


Fig. 1. Size frequency distribution of Black clam *Villorita cyprinoides* from Vembanadu lake (A: Kundanoor region; B: Vaduthala) during post monsoon (2025)

Vembanad Lake, the longest lake in India and the largest in the state of Kerala, supports a vital fishery for the Black clam, *Villorita cyprinoides* (J. E. Gray, 1825), and providing livelihoods for more than 6,000 fishermen. *V. cyprinoides*, is the most important clam species in India contributing more than three-quarters of the clam landings in the country. In response to the recent reports of intensive harvesting of Black clam, *Villorita cyprinoides*, in the Kundanoor and Vaduthala regions of Vembanad Lake during the post monsoon period (September and November 2025), a rapid field survey was conducted in the regions to assess the nature of exploitation. Representative random samples of Black clam were collected from the fishing grounds and analysed for size composition to evaluate compliance with the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) regulations.

In the Kundanoor region high abundance and harvesting of *V. cyprinoides* started during late August 2025 and about 70 fishers were involved throughout August and September 2025. The fishery was supported by clams of 20-45 mm size with the dominance of 30-35 mm size group. Size analysis revealed that more than 75% of the collected clams were above the MLS of black clam (>20 mm). The elevated level of fishing in this region is a direct result of last year's spatfall. In the Vaduthala (Korumkotta) region high abundance and harvesting of *V. cyprinoides* started during late August 2025 and about 70 fishers harvested throughout November and December 2025. The fishery was supported by clams of 20-45 mm size with the dominance of 30-35 mm size group. Size analysis revealed that more than 71% of the collected clams were below the MLS of black clam (<20 mm).

Field observation indicated that fishers from distant locations, such as Chempu, Vaikom, and Panavally have been drawn to this region and actively fished in the black clam beds of Kundanoor and Vaduthala as a source of livelihood. This influx of migrant fishers is primarily attributed to the presence of only juvenile clams in their traditional fishing grounds, which they are largely refraining from harvesting.

These observations highlight contrasting exploitation dynamics within closely located clam beds in the Vembanad Lake, emphasising the need for site-specific monitoring and enforcement of MLS regulations, to ensure the long-term viability of the black clam population.

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