

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF ZOOPLANKTON OF THE MORATUWA-PANADURA ESTUARY

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The zooplankton of the lowermost 7 km region of the Moratuwa - Panadura estuary was studied during the period June 1976 - May 1977 as part of a hydrobiological investigation of the estuary. Monthly samples were collected using a Clarke-Bumpus automatic sampler fitted with net of mesh size 160μ . Samples were analysed in the laboratory to determine volume, total number of zooplankters and the numbers of the major taxa.

Highest values for displacement volume were obtained in January and the lowest in November. The highest total number of zooplankters were recorded in October and the lowest in November. Total number of zooplankters tended to be higher during the latter part of the Southwest monsoon and the succeeding intermonsoonal period.

Calanoids, cyclopoids and nauplius larvae occurred throughout the study period. Calanoids were the dominant group except during the months of August, September, November and March during which months nauplii dominated. Rotifers were present in November and December when the water column tended to be fresh. Cladocerans and ostracods appeared about the same time persisted for a longer time. Hydroid medusae and Chaetognaths were seen during the latter part of the southwest monsoon.

The variations in density and composition of the zooplankton can be explained, partly, in terms of changing hydrological conditions of the estuary.