

**STUDIES ON THE PRAWN FISHERY IN JAFFNA LAGOON****K. Chitravadivelu***(University of Jaffna)*and **K. D. Arudpragasam***(University of Colombo)*

Certain aspects of the prawn fishery in the Jaffna Lagoon were studied over a period of one year from June 1982 to May 1983. Samples were collected fortnightly, from 10 landing centres extending from Ponnalai near the eastern end of the lagoon to Kerativu near the western end. Aspects studied included gear used, total catch, species composition of catch, size of species caught and seasonal variation.

The gear used included drag nets and two types of passive gear, the Sirahu Valai and Raal Koodu. The first two were in use over the whole lagoon area while the real koodu was in use only near the western end. In addition, hand operated traps were in use occasionally at Ponnalai. On the basis of catches the drag net (4.18 kg/day) was the most productive followed by the Sirahu Valai (2.2 kg/day).

Species included in the catches were, in order of relative abundance, *Metapenaeus monoceros*, *Penaeus semi-sulcatus*, *P. indicus* and *P. latisulcatus*. *Penaeus monodon* was caught occasionally. The average sizes of prawns of the first four species was larger during the period June to December than during the period January to May. However, the total catch tended to be lowest for the year during the period July-September.