

Seventeen species of brachyuran crabs found in previously unexplored areas of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands: CMLRE study reveals

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A survey of the deep water brachyuran crabs in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelagos was carried out by Center for Marine Living Resources Ecology (CMLRE) with help of Indian Fisheries Ocean Research Vessel (FORV) Sagar Sampada revealing the presence of seventeen species of brachyuran crabs for the first time in areas where they were previously not recorded. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a Union territory of India comprising 572 islands of which only 37 are inhabited. These group of islands are located at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.

The brachyuran crabs bear immense ecological and economic significance to the country as these crabs are not only an important source of proteins, they are also rich source of carbohydrates, lipids, vitamins, and minerals enabling the fisheries industry to flourish. Now, as many as 17 species of these crabs are spotted by CMLRE in newer areas of the ocean, they would contribute to the fishery wealth of country in a big way to meet their continued demand in the market.

Brachyuran crabs also play a key role in the mangrove ecosystem. They help to “clean up” the sea bottom by harvesting decomposing plant and animal and play a significant role in detritus formation, nutrient recycling, and dynamics of the ecosystem. People also use crabs to cure different diseases like stomach ache, liver and lung diseases, healing wound, osteoporosis, epilepsy, and reproductive malfunction in women etc.

The research team for the first time found a rare carrier crab *Homolochunia valdiviae* in the Northern Indian Ocean which was previously known only to the Western Indian and Western Pacific Ocean regions. Another species of brachyuran crab *Dairoides seafdeci* is found first time in Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with a wider depth range of 299–633 m.



Brachyuran crabs

Parilia Patersoni – a species which was described from the western part of the Bay of Bengal is now recorded by the CMLRE research team for the first time in the Andaman Sea as well as the Arabian Sea. CMLRE scientists confirmed the presence of another species *Platymaia alcocki* in the Indian waters.

Led by Sherine Sonia Cubelio, the research team comprised of V.P. Padate, Narayanane Saravanane, and Maruthadu Sudhakar of CMLRE, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Cochin, K.M. Amritha of Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) and P.K.L. Ng of the National University of Singapore. The research paper is published in the Journal of Regional Studies in Marine Science (available online from 03 February 2020)