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Section D - Life and Earth Sciences

Presidential Address

MANAGEMENT OF LIVING AQUATIC RESOURCES OF
SRI LANKA

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Living aquatic resources of Sri Lanka can be classified according to their habitats as marine, brackishwater and fresh water resources.

The major living resource in all three habitats is undoubtedly the fin fish. About 850 marine fish species are recorded from coastal and off-shore regions of Sri Lanka (Jinadasa 1991) of which most are edible. The major species contributing to the marine fisheries are large pelagics such as Spanish mackerel (*Cybium sp.*) skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), Yellowfin tuna (*Neothunnus macropterus*), Barracudas *Sphyrna sp.*, Bill fish (*Histiophorus sp.*), Trevallies (*Caranx sp.*), Sharks (*Carcharhinidae sp.*), small pelagics such as flying fishes (*Exocoetidae sp.*) sardines, herrings (*Clupeidae sp.*) mackerel (*Rastreliger kanaqurta*) and demersal species such as ribbon fish (*Trichurus spp.*), groupers Fam: *Serranidae*), Snappers (*Lutianus sp.*), skates (*Raja sp.*) and rays (*Trygonidae sp.*).

From the marine environment of Sri Lanka, 31 species of prawns have been recorded (De Bruin 1970). Of these the most important species are *Penaeus monodon*, *P. semisulcatus*, *P. indicus*, *P. merguensis*, *Metapenaeus dobsoni* and *Parapeneopsis stylifera* (Jayakody 1984).

Other marine organisms which are important from the consumer view point are lobsters, crabs, molluscs, sea turtles and some marine mammals. Of the lobster species recorded from Sri Lankan waters, the most important is *Palinurus homarus* (Jayakody 1987). An important crab species recorded in marine waters is *Portunus pelagicus* (Pillai 1965). Of the molluscs species, the oysters (*Cassostrea madrasensis*). Mussels (*Perna viridis* and *Perna perna*), cuttle fish and squids are important as edible species. Sometimes sea turtles are also harvested for food despite their being protected by law. There are four major species of turtles which are killed for human consumption. They are the leatherback turtle, green turtle, Pacific ridley and hawksbill turtle. Sometimes, marine mammals such as the dolphins and porpoises are also killed by the commercial fishermen.

Marine fisheries are classified as coastal, offshore and deep sea resources. Coastal resources within 40km of the coast, offshore resources extend from 40 to 100km and deep sea resources are those beyond 100km.