

## **Exploitation of *Amblygaster sirm* (Walbaum, 1972) in the Eastern Coastal waters of Sri Lanka**

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A study on the fisheries aspects of *Amblygaster sirm* (Walbaum, 1972), the key target species in small meshed gillnet fishery was carried out in Kalmunai and Batticaloa fisheries districts in the Eastern Coastal waters of Sri Lanka. Field sampling was conducted at six landing sites, three from each district on a monthly basis from October 2018 to September 2019. During the field visits, the total landed catch of *A. sirm* from randomly selected boats using small meshed gillnets was recorded together with the catches of other species. Fishing effort was recorded in terms of number of boats operated per day. The gillnets were of 2 or 3 drift gillnet pieces with 3.2 cm and 3.8 cm mesh sizes, while the length of a gillnet was of 5-7 m. Outboard engine Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (OFRP) boats powered with 15 and 25 HP outboard engines were used as the major fishing boats in this fishery. According to the results, *A. sirm* could be considered as the most abundantly recorded species in the small meshed gillnet fishery in this region. The estimated monthly mean Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) ( $48.1 \pm 7.1$  kg;  $p < 0.05$ ) was significantly different between fishing months. Nevertheless, mean CPUE was not significantly different between fish landing sites ( $p > 0.05$ ). The results of the present study can be used as baseline information to develop a management plan for the small mesh gillnet fishery for *A. sirm* resources in the Eastern Coastal waters of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Amblygaster sirm*, exploitation, Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE), small meshed gillnets

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