Baitfish are food for many reef fishes. Their removal in large quantities may have implications for other members of the island ecosystem, although none have yet been quantified.

Baitfish are key to the coral reef systems, playing a role in the islands' food & biomass. They also indirectly affect the livelihood of fishers. Hence, their management is crucial to the economy & ecological sustainability of the islands.

Despite plenty of local knowledge about where to find them, seasonality, etc., not much is known about baitfish populations. This gap prevents us from sustainably harvesting them.

## $\sim$

The future development plans for Lakshadweep should therefore place the health of the lagoons and reefs at the forefront and ensure fisher communities have continued access to them.



Images: John Hoover, Prerana Gawde, Krokodiver, Fishbase, Canva

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# **BAITFISH** RESOURCES OF LAKSHADWEEP

Baitfish are small schooling fish used in Lakshadweep's pole & line (P&L) fisheries as lures to catch larger fish like tuna. They are caught from the reefs & lagoons of the islands and are indispensable to the sustenance of Lakshadweep's P&L fisheries. Information on where a fish forages or reproduces throughout its life can help us look after baitfish populations. For example. knowing when a fish spawns can inform us when they are vulnerable to harvest. This information can translate into developing fish management strategies.



Encircling nets made of PVC are used to catch the Bodhi hovering over coral heads.

Jila mah Blue areen chromi Chromis viridis





Male & female Nila mahi spawn synchronously in aggregations on a semi-lunar cycle, on full moon & new moon nights.



Around 1300 -1500 eggs are laid & the spawned eggs hatch in 2-3 days.



Monofilament lift nets are used



About 35 cm in length

Sexual maturity is attained quickly. They have a high fecundity and lay transparent pelagic



Mukuram reproduce in large aggregations throughout the year, taking lunar cues on full moon nights (pūrņachandran). It starts at dusk, at specific sites on reefs.

eggs after an elaborate mating process.



Lift nets of about 5 mm mesh size made of monofilament PVC material are used.



### About 10.5 cm in total length

Lifespan of about one year. *Hondeli* become sexually mature at about 3.7 cm in approx. 3-4 months.





Estimated 10500 eggs



Nylon or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) encircling nets with a mesh size of 1mm (previously 6mm) with lead

Flondeli **Delicate round herring** Spratelloides delicatulus