



# 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 and lagoons of the islands and are indispensable to the sustenance of Lakshadweep's P&L fisheries.



**Images** (clockwise): Delicate round herring (*Spratelloides delicatulus*): John Hoover; Yellowback fusilier (*Caesio xanthonota*), Blue-green chromis (*Chromis viridis*); Slender cardinalfish (*Rhabdamia gracilis*), A baitball: Canva

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## Key biological features



Maximum length



Spawning process & season



Life-cycle, sexual maturity



Number of eggs



Fishing gear



### Hondeli

Delicate round herring  
*Spratelloides delicatulus*



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.



*Hondeli* spawn in large aggregations at pre-dawn. Spawning is higher during new moon nights (*amāvāsi*). They reproduce beyond their spawning season, with multiple peaks throughout the year, especially around the southwest monsoons.



Estimated 10500 eggs



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



### Rahi

Silver-stripe round herring  
*Spratelloides gracilis*



About 7 cm in total length



Lifespan of maximum one year  
They become sexually mature in 3-4 months, at a size of 3.5 cm.



Spawning is similar to *Hondeli*. They reproduce multiple times in their lifetime and the spawning season is prolonged, with peaks around the southwest monsoons.



About 6000 eggs



Encircling nets with lead sinkers are used. Bamboo poles are used to keep the net well positioned in the water.



### Nila mahi

Blue-green chromis  
*Chromis viridis*



Around 10 cm in size



Lifespan of about 1-2 years



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



They have a high fecundity and the spawned eggs hatch in 2-3 days.



Monofilament lift nets are used.



### Boadhi

Cardinalfishes

Example: *Rhabdamia gracilis*



Around 7.4 cm in length



Lifespan of 4-6 months. They become sexually mature in 3-4 months.



They spawn multiple times in their lifetime. After courtship & spawning, the female releases a mass of eggs. The male fertilizes the eggs & scoops them into its mouth until they hatch.



About ~ 1500 to 3225 eggs



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



### Mukuram

Fusiliers

Example: *Caesio caeruleaurea*



About 35 cm in length



Sexual maturity is attained quickly. They have a high fecundity and lay transparent pelagic eggs after an elaborate mating process.



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



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