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During the course of field observations, an unusual catch of 37 numbers of small sized oil sardines, *Sardinella longiceps* were reported in the shore-seine catches at Vizhinjam on 30-8-2002.

Their size varied between 4.5-8.4cm, and weight between 1.5 to 4.5g. The dominant size group was 5.0-5.4cm (mode at 5.2 cm) followed by 4.5 to 4.9 cm (mode

at 4.6cm) and 5.5 to 5.7 cm (mode at 5.6 cm) constituting 37.9, 24.3 and 16.2% respectively. The different size groups and their percentage distribution are given in Table 1 which indicates that first three size groups formed 78.4% and the rest contributed only 21.6%.

The occurrence of juveniles of oil sardines was recorded earlier by several authors along the coasts of

India. Along the west coast, it was reported at Bombay, Karwar, Mangalore, Chandragiri estuary near Kasaragod, Calicut and Cochin backwaters. Along the east coast, it was reported from Madras and Pondicherry.

Table 1. Size groups and percentage composition of small sized oil sardines *Sardinella longiceps* (Val.) in the landings at Vizhinjam on 30-8-2002

Size groups (cm)	Mean size		Number of fishes	Percentage of size groups
	Length (cm)	Weight (g)		
4.5-4.9	4.6	1.5	9	24.3
5.0-5.4	5.2	1.8	14	37.9
5.5-5.9	5.6	2.5	6	16.2
6.0-6.4	-	-	-	-
6.5-6.9	-	-	-	-

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7.0-7.4	7.2	7.2	1	2.7
7.5-7.9	7.6	7.6	3	8.1
8.0-8.4	8.2	8.2	4	10.8
Total	-	-	37	100

Spawners enter the coastal waters during June-July and spawning takes place subsequently. Spawning season of oil sardines is from July to August. The spawners of oil sardine (size range 145-205mm) were first recorded at Vizhinjam in May, 1976. The present occurrence of small sized oil sardines at Vizhinjam in August 2002 is probably the result of spawning activity, which occurred a few months earlier along the coast. Further, the surface current pattern was observed to be oriented towards south and south-east during this period.

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