

Mass spawning of Scleractinian corals in the Lakshadweep Archipelago

Multispecific synchronous spawning of scleractinian corals has been observed in the Lakshadweep atolls on the morning of sixth day after new moon during March. A team of CMFRI scientists of the Marine Biodiversity Division who were carrying out survey at Bengaram-Tinnakkara Island cluster witnessed this phenomenon at 10.00 am of 18th March 2013.

Most coral species devote a substantial part of their reproductive energy to

sexual reproduction and employs a variety of methods. Though an external fertilisation yields greater amount of genetic mixing, such corals face severe problem of washing away of their gametes before fertilisation can occur. Scleractinians are equipped to overcome this by synchronising the act of releasing gametes by different colonies. This may lead to the formation of thick layer of egg mass on the surface of reef waters. Mass spawning is the nature's solution to that problem of how to get sperm and eggs



Goniastrea sp.



Acropora sp.



Psammacora sp.



Coral egg mass collected from Bengaram lagoon

from parents that are separated widely and that live in an environment of never-ending water movement.

World over the time of release of gametes during mass spawning events has been reported as just after sunset during the late winter period when temperature rises sharply. But current spawning has been particularly noticed on day time around 10.00 am just before the lowest low tide of the day. Though mass spawning has been reported earlier from Maldives and Gulf of Mannar, this is for the first time it has been noticed in Lakshadweep atolls.

(Reported by S. Jasmine, K.R. Sreenath, L. Renjit and Jose Kingsly, Marine Biodiversity Division)



A view of Bengaram Island and adjacent lagoon