

**Status of octocoral and sponge densities along the west coast of India with
special reference to post-tsunami survey**

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Abstract

Sponges (Phylum Porifera) and octocorals (Phylum Cnidaria) are widespread from the polar seas to the tropical oceans and found in the benthic habitats from deepest oceans to the edge of the sea. They are often the dominant animals, but still relatively unknown. The major limiting factor for the distribution of sponges and octocorals is the availability of hard substratum for settlement. Competitive benthic interaction with other reef-organisms also plays a major role in the distribution of these animals. The western Indian coast has many rocky habitats and places such as Vizhinjam, Eniam, Kolachel, Muttom (nearshore and offshore) along the southwestern Indian coast and Netrani and Grand islands offshore of Goa along the central west coast were surveyed. In April 2003; a total of 17 species of octocorals and 35 species of sponges were recorded from the study area. Many new records were also reported. The densities of octocorals and sponges were compared with the post tsunami survey conducted at Muttom, one of the tsunami affected districts, The densities of barnacles, octocorals and sponges were found to decrease and fine turfing algae and rubble increase after tsunami.

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