

**ZOOPLANKTON DIVERSITY IN SELECTED COASTAL WATERS OF
MANDAITHIVU ISLAND, JAFFNA, SRI LANKA**

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Zooplankton are floating and drifting animals with limited power of locomotion. They occupy an intermediate position between autotrophs and carnivores in the food web. The presence and dominance of zooplankton species plays an important role in the functioning of aquatic ecosystem. The present investigation was carried out to identify the zooplanktons species diversity in Mandaithivu coastal waters. Mandaithivu is an island located west to the Jaffna town and associated with mangrove ecosystem. Samples were collected weekly, from October 2017 to March 2018 in selected coastal waters between 6 am -10 am. Collected zooplanktons were identified using standard keys according to the morphological features. Eight species of zooplanktons such as, Copepod, Ostracod, *Daphnia* sp, Foraminifera, Fish larvae, veliger larvae of Mollusc, nauplius and shrimp like organisms were identified. Nauplius and *Daphnia* sp. were observed in higher number than fish-larvae, veliger and ostracods, whereas foraminifera were the least. During the study period, Copepods was recorded as the dominant species in Mandaithivu coastal waters.

Keywords: Zooplankton, Mandaithivu, abundance, Mangrove.