

## **Introduction, status and distribution of Mollusca**

Molluscs are probably the most abundant invertebrate animals in modern oceans. They are very adaptive and occupy every possible habitats. Molluscs act as an important component of biomass. They are mostly benthic, many are pelagic. Though primarily inhabitant of the intertidal and littoral zones of the oceans, they can also be found in greater depths. Sandy coasts support less diversity and burrowing forms. Wide range of variation in size is observed. Molluscs include snails, slugs, mussels, clams, oysters, octopuses, squids, and others. (Opisthobranchs)

Marine molluscs have consumptive and productive uses. They are used for food, commercial valuable products like pearl, raw materials for shell craft, shell lime, cement and lime industries and calcium resources in the poultry feed. They are also potential resources of biomedical components and used for manufacturing drugs. As a result of over exploitation, some species may become endangered.

India's coastline measures 7,517 kilometres in length. According to the Indian naval hydrographic charts, the mainland coastline consists of the following: 43% sandy beaches; 11% rocky shores, including cliffs; and 46% mudflats or marshy shores. Coastal features include the marshy Rann of Kutch of western India and the Sundarbans delta of eastern India. India has two archipelagos: the Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The diversity is more in the marine molluscs in India on east and west coasts and the islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar. They occur in diverse habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, rocky coasts, sandy beaches, sea grass beds and at great depth in the sea. The diversity and abundance is more in the rocky intertidal zone along the coasts and in the coral reef ecosystem. Commercial exploitation of these molluscs by various coastal people has caused a decline in the population of these molluscs on Indian coasts. The harvest of these species requires urgent need of control otherwise few species might be declined to extinction. Climate change and marine pollution have become major problems for marine organisms. For them, it has become difficult to adapt with changing climate. It's also affecting the food chain. Therefore, BNHS has taken a forward step to conserve these species.

To document the coastal diversity of molluscs of India, BNHS has undertaken the study of Mollusca. Systematic study of Molluscs and their distribution are the steps taken by BNHS to conserve this group.