

“A deadly bloom in Muttukadu Estuary”

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MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2021

A deadly bloom in Muttukadu Estuary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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An excessive algal and plant growth in the Muttukadu Estuary, a process brought on by an increased load of nutrients, is posing a serious problem to the environment and fish species.

Scientists at the Muttukadu experimental station of the Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture said fish had started dying due to oxygen depletion caused by a process called eutrophication. The mouth of the Muttukadu Estuary has been blocked by sand deposited by the high tides of the sea. Normally, the blockage would be removed by the Public Works Department in October, November and December.

Local fishermen and government institutions operating near the lagoon complained that the stagnant water emitted a foul smell.

A study published in the *International Journal of Science Inventions Today* on eutrophication explains how *Microcystis aeruginosa*, a



Lurking danger: The unbridled growth of algae and plants has affected the water quality at Muttukadu Estuary.

species of cyanobacteria that can form harmful algal blooms, has affected the water quality of the Muttukadu backwaters.

Threat to marine life

“The bloom forms like a film on the water surface and reduces the water clarity and oxygen content. These algae produce hepatotoxin, called ‘microcystin’, which in high concentrations could be fatal to fishes, humans, birds and other aquatic organisms.

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and industrial wastes, affects the normal phytoplankton composition of the study area,” said one of the authors of the study, S. Vasudevan of the Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology, Faculty of Marine Sciences, Annamalai University, Parangipettai.

The investigation also underscored the need for regular monitoring of algal bloom and physico-chemical parameters in the Muttukadu backwaters to conserve fishery resources and protect human health.

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