

The best and the brightest of *Bay of Bengal News*

Eighty issues of *Bay of Bengal News*! So many wonderful articles, photographs, layouts. How does one pick the best of them? The criteria for inclusion in this article: articles strong in ideas which have made an impact on our readers; visuals that are striking in terms of creativity, imagination and aesthetic delight. In other words, only what's exceptional and outstanding.

Let me begin with two charming photo essays early in BBN history, fairly novel for fisheries magazines. But both these were cited in the article on BBN history (page 16). The first photo essay was in the second issue (May 1981), on Bangladesh – terrific photographs by Harry Miller. The next photo essay was in December 1981, a selection of photographs from our October 16 photo exhibition held in Chennai. The essay was as much a social statement on small-scale fisheries as on the art and craft of photography. The photo exhibition was a major exercise in public awareness-raising, so was the BBN that reported on it.

The same issue (December 1981) must be rated one of the best ever in BBN – the depth in content matched the visual appeal. It was a Sri Lanka special. An excellent article on Sri Lankan fisheries was illustrated, ingeniously, with photographs enclosed in a map of Sri Lanka. A graphic article on Negombo (with a big two-page spread of Negombo boats under sail), a piece on demersal fisheries by G H de Bruin, and a four-pager on women in Sri Lankan fisheries – every piece a little gem.

The fifth issue (March 1982) was also a champion. Its highlights; picturesque coverage of the Bay of Bengal Committee inaugural in



Colombo; a Q & A interview with John Kurien about the Kerala costs and earnings study carried out for BOBP by the Fisheries Research Cell ; a four-pager on sails with a splendid breath-taking double-spread sketch on sails; and visually innovative articles on women's projects and on "Planning from below in Adirampattinam." (The bottom half of the two-page spread was an eye-stopper: a group of fisherfolk bicyclists shot against a village backdrop, across a pool of water that reflected their images.)

The March 1983 BBN carried a poignant two-page photograph of fisherwoman Tillai and two of her children. Rarely has the mood of despair and fatalism in a person's face been captured with such stark realism. It was part of an article on the poverty of a typical fishing family.

The July 1983 issue had three of the most imaginative photo creations a fisheries reader would have come across. For the first, the artist cut out the word "Killai" from the photograph. It can't be described, take a look at the cover of the July

1983 BBN. The second was a panoramic presentation of the Killai pen-culture project, assembled from half a dozen photographs by artist-cum-photographer E Amalore. The third picture was referred on page 18.

This issue also contained an important pictorial report. Heading: "All the BOBP's men (and women) – hundreds of them!" The message: Though only a couple of dozen staff worked at BOBP in Madras, as many as 4 000 people took part in BOBP's work at that time: in fishing villages, beaches, boatyards, fish ponds, pens and cages, out at sea. These included boatbuilders, net-makers, mechanics, welders, labourers, social workers, extension workers, government counterparts, fisheries experts.

The September 1983 BBN presented a few splendid visuals. The article "Bay of Bengal Committee meets in Madras" silhouetted a xerox image of the Mahabalipuram shore temple against the horizon as a symbol of Tamil Nadu; the text was reversed in white on a black screen. An article on "tree fishing" in Tamil Nadu carried an unforgettable picture of a

huge tree branch being taken to the sea on a kattumaram. In fact Harry Miller, who shot that picture, asked us what these fishermen were doing with that tree. We got two Tamil Nadu fisheries officials, S Pandurangan and P V Ramamoorthy, to describe the use of tree branches as an FAD.

The December 1983 BBN featured a cover package on sail power, reportage on a sail consultation and a sail contest, with sketches of different types of sails. The Gunter rig was the winner for medium-sized boats (sail area of 20 to 30m²) and large boats (30m²).

The March 1984 BBN came in for high praise from FAO Rome. It should be considered one of the strongest BBN issues of the first BOBP phase – thoughtful and provocative articles on varied subjects: the success with bank credit for Orissa fisherfolk; the experiments in Sonadia island; jewfish export from Cox’s Bazar – a comprehensively illustrated feature on a major enterprise in Bangladesh that began as an act of serendipity.

The June 1984 BBN cover story “When foxes entered a shrimp pond,” with a sketch of two foxes, was one of the most widely read stories in BBN! It was about BOBP’s shrimp culture project in Polekurru, Andhra Pradesh. Another popular story: A six-pager by Swedish artist Signar Bengtsson, a votary of sails, with nine interesting sketches of traditional craft under sails. Also significant was a story on BOBP’s effort in Bangladesh to raise the incomes of women from fishing villages.

The September 1984 BBN had an outstanding visual to illustrate an article that profiled Angamma, a fisherwoman. A double-spread photograph of her carrying a basket of fish was silhouetted against the landscape. The same issue also carried a six-page article by director Lars Engvall analyzing the impact of BOBP work. He discussed four types of impact – negative, negligible, positive, potential. A

third notable article was on fish stock assessment by Daniel Pauly.

The September 1986 BBN carried an excellent analytical article by Arne Andreasson on “Ensuring effective follow-up to BOBP pilot activities”. The December 1986 BBN, a special on “people’s participation,” has been discussed on page 19. The March 1987 BBN contained a cover package on shrimp culture that was featured by an FAO Rome publication that highlighted newsletters. (See page 18.) The March 1988 BBN carried the insightful article “No easy solutions for set bagnet fisherfolk”, based on a study by five national fisheries staffers. The June 1988 BBN focused on Malacca Straits – with articles on extension activities in the Ranong project, Thailand; oyster culture, Malaysia, and fisherfolk credit, Indonesia. This issue also reported on a Swedish “minor field study” project about the marketing of beachcraft catches in Puri, Orissa, with action photographs from Delhi, Calcutta and Puri, and a much-in-demand full-page sketch tracing the flow of beachcraft catches from Puri to various destinations.

In the September 1988 BBN, the cover package on “Safety at Sea” highlighted the experiences of Sri Lankan fishermen who had drifted to Indonesia. Consultant Urban Hallberg discussed the action Sri Lanka needed to take on many fronts to ensure safety at sea. Post-harvest technology was the cover package in December 1988 – articles on use of ice in Andhra Pradesh and Sri Lanka, fish smoking in the Maldives, discard of shrimp by-catch at sea.

The last page of the June 1989 issue – an obituary of Antony Raja – inspired comment from far and near. In the September 1989 BBN, a significant article compared offshore tuna exploratory projects in Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Fisheries management had started becoming a serious issue, and the December 1990 BBN featured a

cover-story interview with Dr Armin Lindquist, FAO’s Assistant Director-General of Fisheries, “Management is the only solution”. A lovely four page photo feature on extension activities in Bangladesh was another highlight.

The June 1991 BBN carried a cover feature on “The life-giving death-taking waters of Bangladesh” by S Muthiah, his first issue as editor. (He edited the next 12 issues as well.) He discussed the horrors of the April 1991 cyclone which killed more than 150 000 people and wrought havoc to the fisheries sector worth \$130 million. The September 1991 BBN carried a photo feature on boats in Nias island, Indonesia, and reports on BOBP’s radio project in Sri Lanka.

An interesting fish marketing profile of a bicycle fish trader in Sri Lanka was one of the highlights of the June 1992 BBN. Extension activities and a bio-socio-economic study of set bagnet fisheries, Bangladesh, were other significant articles. Pelagic sharks in the Indian Ocean were for the first time the cover focus of BBN in December 1992 – with a cover article on the shark resource by fisheries biologist K



Sivasubramaniam; an analysis of shark fishing in the Maldives by R C Anderson and Hudha Ahmed, an article on shark longlining on India's east coast by Thomas Dahlgren, and a report on shark fin trade in the Bay of Bengal.

What's the effect of the marine environment on fisheries in the Bay of Bengal? This was discussed in the March 1991 BBN by Swedish environmental adviser Staffan Holmgren. Also in this issue, studies on the killing of dolphins in Sri Lanka – showing that only 5 200 dolphins a year were killed, not an alarmist 60 000 – were analysed by Leslie Joseph and Pauline Dayaratne.

The June 1993 BBN discussed 50 issues of BBN, an important article on research needs for fisheries management by K Sivasubramaniam, and an analysis of new outrigger canoes in Sri Lanka by G Pajot. BOBP's brilliantly researched and presented comic book "Our fish, our wealth" was evaluated by Rathin Roy in the September 1993 BBN. "Can trickle-down economics work in the shrimp culture industry?", asked Charles Angell.

The December 1993 BBN was a landmark – a farewell letter from publisher Lars Engvall, plus a cover feature "A new approach to fisheries management" with an imaginative cover sketch on bio-socio-economics and a package of articles inside. Leslie Joseph analysed the prawn culture boom in Sri Lanka while Charles Angell revisited Polekurru, Andhra Pradesh – a picture far different from the one about a decade ago.

The Management Phase

The management phase of BOBP began in 1995. BBN was no longer "crowded" with people, events and activities as in earlier phases. Its articles in this phase were contemplative. Many creative sketches adorned the pages of BBN, since management does not lend itself to photographs.

A sampling of the many articles on management in various issues of BBN: "Responsible fish consumers can strengthen fisheries management," by Kee-Chai Chong (June-September 1996). "Unresolved and new issues in fisheries management" by Kee-Chai Chong and John Kurien (March 1997). "Reef resources management

in the Maldives" (March 1997 BBN); "Coming together to manage fisheries" by Rathin Roy, a Q & A article on the stakeholder approach to fisheries management (June 1999); "Fisheries and aquatic resources management: lessons not learned yet" by Kee-Chai Chong (September 1999).

The theme of stewardship in coastal zone management inspired a superbly imaginative cover design in the June-September 1996 BBN. Sketches showed how fishermen, tourists, consumers, fisherwomen, administrators, donors and middlemen could together help stewardship. This issue contained an article by 13 authors – a record for BBN. It was on "Regional stewardship for sustainable fisheries and food security." A colourful two-page photo feature highlighted "Issues and solutions in fisheries management" – the BOBP projects in member-countries.

The December 1996 BBN was much acclaimed within and outside the region for its splendid coverage of ornamental fisheries (See page 24). This issue also contained a lovely photo feature on "Income options for women in Bangladesh fishing communities". Another photo feature followed in the March 1997 BBN: by S R Madhu on "Community-based fisheries management in Phang-Nga bay, Thailand".

Shrimp culture was the theme of the September 1998 BBN: articles by M Sakthivel of the Aquaculture Foundation, John Kurien and Charles Angell (who wrote about the plight of shrimp farmers in Andhra Pradesh). There was also a case-study of the CMFRI and an interview with a shrimp exporter. Shrimp was again the focus of a cover package in March 2000. Marine parks of Malaysia were highlighted in the December 1998 BBN.

The March-June 1999 BBN contained a first-of-its-kind report on the visit to Chennai of FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf.



The people behind *Bay of Bengal News*

The following were the main *dramatis personae* behind the 80 issues of BBN from 1979 to 2006.

1. Lars Engvall – the first publisher (1979-1994).
2. S R Madhu – the first editor (1981-1991) & consultant (1996 - till date).
3. E Amalore – the first artist, also an engineer, a draughtsman, a photographer (1981-1994, 1996-2000).
4. Vijay Kumar – video specialist and photographer (1988 - 1992).
5. S Jayaraj – artist, photographer and video cameraman. (1985 - 1994, 2001 to till date).
6. S Muthiah – the second editor (1991-1995).
7. Rathin Roy – extension specialist, regular contributor to BBN (1987-2000).
8. Kee-Chai Chong – publisher-cum-editor (1995-2000).
9. Y S Yadava – publisher-cum-editor (2000-till date).

Nagaraj & Co have printed all issues of *Bay of Bengal News* except those during the third phase of BOBP (1995-2000).

Its managing director M S Nagarajan has been a keen enthusiast of BOBP.



Sri Lankan fishermen on the cover of the March 2001 BBN aroused great interest. Well-attended workshops on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries held in Chennai (September 2000 BBN), Dhaka (Jan 2002-March 2003 BBN), Malé (September 2004 BBN) and Colombo (December 2005 BBN) generated detailed coverage. Fisheries profiles have been published for east coast states of India, and for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives. There have been two reviews of BOBP work (December 2000, January 2002-March 2003, the present issue discusses 25 years of BBN) to summarise the lessons of the past. The tsunami and measures for rehabilitation have been analysed.

Two lovely photo features illustrated the BOBP-IGO's art contests for children on "Life after the tsunami" in Tamil Nadu and Maldives (September 2005) and Sri Lanka (December 2005). The enthusiasm and energy displayed by the children were expected, but the quality of their paintings, and the maturity and thoughtfulness they displayed, was indeed a revelation. A photo feature on Sri Lankan fisheries after the tsunami was another highlight of the December 2005 BBN. The present issue of BBN discusses the work of the CIFE, Mumbai. This is the first of a series of articles on "Know your Institution" about leading fisheries institutions of member-countries.

The subject orientation of BBN has changed, but the passion, the commitment, the striving for excellence goes on.

– S R Madhu

There was also a cover package on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the first of many, with articles by Dr Y S Yadava and John Kurien. The September 1999 BBN reviewed a book by Dr K Sivasubramaniam on 100 years of fisheries management in Sri Lanka. The December 1999 and Jan 2000 issues discussed "Documentation of learnings" from the management phase of BOBP, result of a two-member mission (Gary Preston and Y S Yadava) that reviewed BOBP activities in member-countries.

The first BBN issue under Dr Yadava's editorship, September

2000, discussed a Workshop on the Code of Conduct. The keynote address by Mr N K Sinha, GOI Secretary, was reproduced, along with articles by John Kurien, Sebastian Mathew and Kee-Chai Chong. The December 2000 BBN analysed the management of push net and set bagnet fisheries in Bangladesh.

BBN during the first six years of the new millennium has had an awareness-raising and educational orientation. Safety at sea has been featured several times (March 2001, June-September 2001, December 2005, March 2006). The eye-catching batik painting of

Fishing with shore seine in Sri Lanka

