

**THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS FISHERY OF PANAY ISLAND, WEST CENTRAL PHILIPPINES: FISHING PRACTICES AND YIELD**

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**ABSTRACT:** The catch, catch rates, fishing and marketing practices of the chambered nautilus (*Nautilus pompilius* Linnaeus) fishery of Antique, northwestern Panay island, west central Philippines were studied between October 2001 and October 2002. Results showed a weather-related seasonality which dictates the availability of baits and thus, fishing effort. This seasonality is more apparent in the number of fishing days than the mean number and soaking time of traps. Mean daily catch for the study period was 1.75 kg fisherman<sup>-1</sup> with a mean catch rate of 0.02 kg trap-hr<sup>-1</sup>. Mean monthly harvest is equivalent to 16.5 kg fisherman<sup>-1</sup> (= 30.5 inds. fisherman<sup>-1</sup>), which would translate to a total annual harvest for the entire fishery of 6.6 MT yr<sup>-1</sup>. The annual value of the harvest from the sale of the shells and the meat would amount to PhP 542.5T (~ US \$ 10T), bringing an income of PhP 10.85T fisherman<sup>-1</sup>yr<sup>-1</sup>. The estimated annual catch is considered realistic, and would most likely exceed that of another existing, but even more seasonal, chambered nautilus fishery in Aklan, northern Panay. Since both fisheries have existed for decades, the catches may still be sustainable, as naturally imposed by the species' deep-water distribution and response to fluctuations in environmental conditions. Fishery-independent surveys would facilitate the estimation of the populations' stock size or biomass and the determination of their spatio-temporal distribution.