ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to place on record my deep gratitude and indebtedness to Dr. K. C. John, Director, School of Applied Life Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, under whose supervision this work was carried out. My sincere thanks are due to him for suggesting the problem, for the valuable guidance and encouragement extended to me throughout the course of this investigation.

Thanks are also due to Prof. K. G. Padmanabhan (Rtd.), Dept. of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, for his timely help and valuable suggestions at various stages of the preparation of this thesis.

I also remember with gratitude Dr. A. Chandran, Dr. Thomas George and the teachers of the School of Applied Life Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for going through the manuscript and timely suggestion and corrections. My thanks are also due to Mr. Vinod Mathew and other members of the staff, School of Technology & Applied Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for all the help rendered to me. I am grateful to my teacher Prof. V. I. Joseph for his perpetual inspiration.

I gratefully acknowledge the University Grants Commission for the Teacher Fellowship provided for the completion of the work. I am also thankful to the M.O.C. Management, Principal, Head of the Department of Zoology and the members of staff, Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta for their kind co-operation and help.

I specially remember my father in this occasion. The constant encouragement and moral support from my mother, wife and children gave me much impetus to complete this endeavor successfully.

Above all I thank GOD ALMIGHTY for all the blessings.

Pathanamthitta
25-09-2004

THOMAS JOHN P