

Large scale exploitation of the Unicorn leatherjacket by multiday trawlers

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Aluterus monoceros commonly known as the Unicorn leatherjacket or filefishes were exploited by multiday trawlers in Karnataka, but catch volumes were always low. However since mid-April 2015, large quantities were landed both at Mangalore and Malpe Fishing Harbours. The fish has limited preference in local markets but fetches a very good price in other domestic markets and the fishers were happy with the unusual catches.

While small unicorn leatherjacket prefer estuaries and coastal habitats with plenty of weed and reef cover, the larger ones occur in offshore waters. In Karnataka, the trawlers operating at depths ranging from 70 - 100 m were exploiting the larger sized *A. monoceros*. Locally known 'batmeenu' soon after landing is skinned and packed in boxes. The fish which originally has a pale grey to brown thick leathery skin then looks smooth with a pinkish white colouration and is



Skinned Unicorn leatherjacket proceeding for sale

sold to local restaurants under the trade name "China pomfret". The landing price ranged from ₹150 - 200 per kg depending on the size and quantity landed. During the second half of April, around 53 units landed at Mangalore and Malpe Harbours daily with the catch per unit ranging from 0.25 to 4.5 t and the trend continued during May also.