

**NOTE ON AN OVIPAROUS ZEBRA SHARK *STEGOSTOMA FACIATUM*  
(HERMANN) LANDED AT MANDAPAM**

**ABSTRACT**

An oviparous female Zebra shark *Stegostoma faciatum* measuring 205 cm in total length is reported from Mandapam. A brief description and morphometric measurements of the specimen are presented.

ON 6-11-1984 one of the authors, while observing the fish catch at the Mandapam landing centre, encountered a Zebra shark measuring 205 cm in total length and weighing 40 kg. The fish was caught by a trawler

operated at a depth of 20 m in the Gulf of Mannar off Mandapam.

The various body measurements (in cm) of the specimen are presented below :

Total length (distance from the extreme tip of the snout to extreme tip of the caudal fin)	205.0	Width of pelvic fin	13.5
Head length	17.0	Snout to anus	72.0
Snout to first dorsal	55.0	Snout to anal fin origin	100.0
Base of first dorsal	20.0	Length of anal fin	14.0
Height of first dorsal	12.0	Base of anal fin	12.5
Length of first dorsal	27.0	Maximum height of the body	28.0
Width of first dorsal	11.5	Height at second dorsal	20.0
Snout to second dorsal	90.0	Height at caudal fin	14.0
Base of second dorsal	15.5	Caudal fin length	84.0
Height of second dorsal	7.0	Maximum height at caudal fin	21.0
Length of second dorsal	19.0	Width at the end of caudal fin	5.5
Width of second dorsal	7.0	Width of mouth (angle to angle)	14.0
Snout to pectoral fin	29.0	Mouth opening	10.0
Base of pectoral fin	18.5	Length of gills (1-5)	11.0
Pectoral outer curvature	34.5	Width of gill opening	5.0
Pectoral inner curvature	29.5	Distance between the barbels	7.5
Snout to pelvic fin origin	67.0	Height of barbels	2.0
Length of pelvic fin	15.5	Distance between nostrils	11.5

**Description:** The specimen at hand agrees with the description given by Jones and Kumaran (1980) in most of the external characters. A low median ridge on the dorsal aspect and another on the side were present. The median ridge was found to start from just above the first gill slit, situated 4 cm below the first dorsal fin (Fig. 1). The lateral ridge was seen starting from the origin of pectoral fin, 7 cm below the first dorsal, and traversing along the mid-lateral aspect of the body.

Snout was very short and the upper lip was thick, like a pad bent downwards, with a short barbel (2 cm) on either side. Teeth

*Stegostoma faciatum* called 'Corungun sorrah' in Telugu and 'Monkey-mouthed shark' in English, is one of the most handsome sharks of the Indian Ocean. It is often found on coral reefs or near the bottom.

Distinctive colour pattern of the young and adult separates this from all other species of shark. Young specimens below 60 cm have the dorsal side dark brown or blackish with vertical yellow bars, spots and reticulations and the ventral side of the head, abdomen and tail are whitish. But in subadult and adult, the head, body and caudal region are with transverse rows of

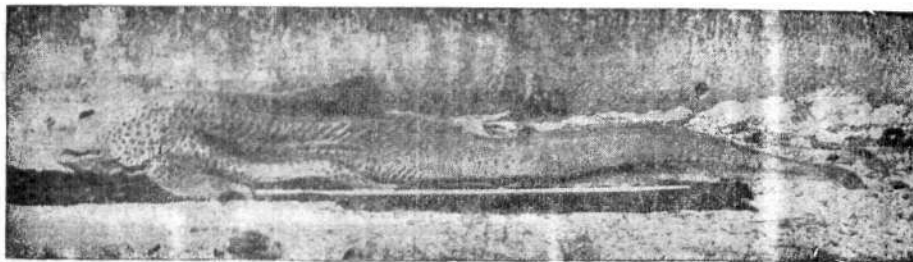


Fig. 1. *Stegostoma faciatum* (Hermann) caught at Mandapam.

were small, tricuspid and were arranged in several series in both the jaws. Eye was small with a spiracle just behind it. The total length of five gill slits was 11 cm, the 4th and the 5th gill slits being located close to each other. Nostrils were situated in front of the snout.

**Remarks:** *Stegostoma faciatum* is the only widely distributed oviparous species of the genus recorded from India. Day (1858) and Gunther (1880) described the species as *S. tigrinum*, while Weber and De Beaufort (1936), Munro (1955), Smith (1961) and Fischer and Bianchi (1984) referred to it as *S. faciatum*. Misra (1952) and recently Jones and Kumaran (1980) recorded the species under the name of *S. varium* (Seba).

dark, brown spots and streaks. Dorsal, pectoral and ventral fins are also spotted. Hence the shark is frequently referred to as 'Zebra shark', 'Tiger shark' and 'Leopard-shark' (Smith, 1961). Distinctive colour pattern of the young and the adult was well illustrated by Fisher and Bianchi (1984). The caudal fin is exceedingly long measuring half of the total length.

*S. faciatum* is reported to attain a length of 5-6' (152.5—183.0 cm) by Munro (1955), 6' (183.0 cm) by Day (1858) and 11' (335.5 cm) by Gunther (1880) and Smith (1961), maximum possible 11.6' (354.0 cm) by Fischer and Bianchi (1984). Day (1858) figured a specimen of 12 inches (30.5 cm) captured at Madras. Recently Jones and Kumaran (1980)

described with illustrations a specimen of 45 cm size collected at Kalpeni Island. There is a difference of opinion among authors about the maximum size of the adult specimen and this may be due to the rare occurrence of the adult shark in the commercial catches. Young ones generally keep close to the coasts while the adult is common in open ocean (Gunther, 1880). Even though the young ones are reported to be common along Madras Coast (Day, 1858) this is the first record of an adult specimen as large as 205 cm reported from Indian waters off Mandapam.

*S. faciatum* is one of the oviparous sharks and lays oblong egg cases 10 to 17 cm long (Smith, 1961) and the size of the young ones at the time of hatching is between 20 cm and 36 cm (Fischer and Bianchi, 1984). Zebra shark is known to feed on crustaceans and molluscs, but also takes small fishes. It is generally caught in bottom trawls, fixed bottom gill nets and long lines.

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