

Unusual catch of flapnose ray in ring seine

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An estimated 130 ring seiners are employed exclusively to exploit small pelagic resources such as sardines and mackerels along south Cuddalore coast. Occasionally large mobulid rays are also landed in stray numbers as by-catch in the ringseine landings at Cuddalore Fisheries Harbour. There has been no incidence of elasmobranch landings in large quantities by ring seines in this region. However on 15.07.2017, an unusually high landing of an estimated 1.3 tonne (t) of the flapnose ray *Rhinoptera javanica* was observed. The ring seiner had harvested a shoal of flapnose rays, comprising 122 individuals with disc width (DW) ranging from 90 to 110 cm at 10 m depth off Parangipettai (11° 32.398'N, 79° 49.916'E). The entire catch was sold for ₹ 120 per kg to traders. The near-shore waters of southeast coast of India, particularly between Chennai and Gulf of Mannar are known breeding grounds for *R. javanica*. Aggregation of breeding population and incidences of bulk landing

of this species by shore seiner and bottomset gillnet has been reported earlier (James 1962, *J. mar Biol. Ass India*, 4(2): 217 - 223; Srinivasrengan, 1979 *Indian J. Fish.*, 26(1&2): 239). In the present observation, most of the specimens were females but none could be examined for embryonic development to ascertain if it was a breeding shoal. Flapnose rays of similar size group landed in Mumbai were reported to be pregnant and carrying well developed embryo (Thakurdas *et al.*, 2006, *Mar. Fish Infor. Ser., T&E Ser.*, 189:22-23). Of late, the declining catch of pelagic resources by ring seine along the Cuddalore coast, has prompted many of the fleets to cease operations or switch to targeting other available resources that show schooling behaviour, including elasmobranchs. Such exploitation can prove detrimental for those elasmobranchs which have high vulnerability and low resilience on account of their slow growth and reproductive traits.