

ON *THYRSOIDEA MACRURA* (BLEEKER), THE LONGEST GIANT
MORAY EEL FROM THE INDIAN WATERS

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A specimen of the giant moray eel, *Thyrsoidea macrura*, measuring 3080 mm in length (after preservation), obtained from Karwar is described. This appears to be the longest specimen of the species on record.

The giant moray eel, *Thyrsoidea macrura* belonging to the family Muraenidae is probably the largest eel attaining a length of over 3 metres. Along the west coast of India, these eels are captured in long lines and the largest specimen so far recorded on this coast is 1686 mm in length from Bombay waters (Bal and Mohamed, 1957). Gunther (1870) referred to a 10 feet (—3048 mm) long skin of *T. macrura* from Ceylon, which represents probably the largest specimen on actual record. James (1965), during the course of field observations in the Palk Bay on the east coast of India, came across a specimen 3031 mm long which he registered as the largest from the Indian waters and as the second largest record in the world.

While examining shore seine (yendi) catches at Karwar on the west coast of India on 3-9-1970, a specimen of *T. macrura* was encountered, which measured 3080 mm in length after 24 hours of preservation in 40% formalin and weighed 2.72 kg. (Undiluted formalin was used for effecting quick death and proper preservation). Since a certain amount of shrinkage is to be expected after preservation in such a high concentration of formalin, the specimen should have measured more than this and, going by the previous reports, the present one appears to be the longest specimen recorded so far.

The various measurements of the specimen are presented in Table 1. Comparing the body proportion of the present specimen with those of James (1965) it is seen that, while most of the characters exhibit narrow range of variations, those that appear to be highly variable are height at gill opening, at anus and at half metre in front of tip of tail as well as the eye diameter.

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The most noticeable deviation appears to be the thickness at different regions of the present specimen which is very thin compared to the earlier records. The wide disparity in the weight (7.26 kg of the east coast specimen against 2.72 kg of the present one) also bears out that the specimen recorded here is remarkably lean.

TABLE 1. *Measurements of Thyrsoidea macrura in mm*

S.No.	Characters	Measurements (mm)
1.	Total length (snout to tip of tail)	3080
2.	Snout to vent	985
3.	Head length (snout to gill opening)	235
4.	Snout (tip of snout to front margin of eye)	20
5.	Eye diameter (horizontal)	9
6.	Interorbital space	16
7.	Predorsal distance	160
8.	Snout to anal	1008
9.	Length of dorsal	2920
10.	Length of anal	2072
11.	Height at orbit	29
12.	Height at gill opening	73
13.	Height at anus	65
14.	Height half metre in front of tip of tail	54
15.	Thickness at gill opening	40
16.	Thickness midway between gill opening and anus	32
17.	Thickness at anus	28
18.	Thickness half metre in front of tip of tail	15
19.	Origin of lateral line from snout	210

The stomach was almost empty except for a single specimen each of *Trypauchen vagina*, squid and partly digested rainbow sardine. The examination of the gonad indicated that the specimen was male, probably immature. It may be of interest to mention here that all the recent collections of *T. macrura* from the east coast and west coast of India were found to be males.

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