

Taxonomic note on the Indian species of genus *Netuma*

Shikha Rahangdale*, K. Rajan, V. Vinaykumar, D. Divu, K. Tarachand, P. Abdul Azeez and S. Kapil
Veraval Regional Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Veraval- 362 269, Gujarat

*E-mail: shikharahangdalecife@gmail.com

In Indian waters, genus *Netuma* is represented by two species namely *N. bilineata* and *N. thalassina* (Order: Siluriformes, Family: Ariidae). Rounded snout, thin lips, inconspicuous median longitudinal groove, and higher anal fin ray count (16-19) are characters of *N. bilineata* while *N. thalassina* has conical snout, clearly visible median longitudinal groove and lower anal fin ray count (13-15). Prior to the erection of *N. bilineata* (earlier considered as synonym of *N. thalassina*) as valid species, Indian workers had difference of opinion regarding the representation of species under this genus from Indian waters. Jayaram and Dhanze (1978) were of opinion that only *Tachysurus thalassinus* (*N. thalassina*) is present in Indian waters

and a similar looking species reported from India is the juvenile of the *Tachysurus thalassinus*. On the other hand, Menon *et al.* (1982) were of the opinion that there are two species namely *T. serratus* and *T. thalassinus*.

In present investigation, the two species were found to be significantly different in several morphometric aspects. *N. thalassina* is found to have longer pre-dorsal, snout and head length whereas longer adipose fin and barbels length were recorded in case of *N. bilineata*. Palatine teeth pattern of *N. thalassina* have longer and relatively narrowly separated posterior patch of teeth compared to *N. bilineata*. The inner vomerine teeth in the later case are joined along the mesial



Fig. 1. *Netuma bilineata* with round snout (a) and vomerine teeth attached along mesial line (b) with wider gap between posterior patches (c) indicated.



Fig. 2. *Netuma thalassina* with conical snout (a) vomerine teeth separated along mesial line (b) with narrow gap between posterior patches (c) indicated.

Table 1. Differentiating characters for the two species of genus *Netuma* from Indian waters

Characters	<i>N. bilineata</i>	<i>N. thalassina</i>
Snout	Round	Conical (prominent in adult)
Lips	Relatively thin	Relatively thin
Median longitudinal groove	Inconspicuous	Prominent
Anal fin rays	Mostly higher count (modal count 17/18)	Mostly lower (modal count 15)
Inner vomerine teeth patch	Joined along mesial line	Never joined along mesial line
Posterior teeth patch	Relatively widely separated	Relatively closer to each other

line, whereas in former case they are clearly separated. To help the field enumerators and surveyors in easy identification and correct reporting of the species from commercial landings the Figures (1&2) and Table 1 are presented.

References

- Jayaram and Dhanze. 1978, *Bull. Zool. Surv. India*, 1 (2):203-205.
 Menon et al., 1982. *J. Mar. Bio. Assoc. India*, 24:61-68.