

RECORD OF THE SUNFISH *MASTURUS OXYUROPTERUS* (BLEEKER) FROM THE INDIAN COAST

ABSTRACT

The sunfish *Masturus oxyuropterus* (Bleeker) is reported for the first time from the Indian Coast. The morphological features of the present specimen from the Gulf of Mannar and the distribution of this species are dealt with. The liver of the fish was found infested with seventy-two blastocysts of the cestode, *Molicola horridus* (Goodsir).

SUNFISHES of the family Molidae are truly oceanic and they have a restricted distribution. Occurrences of sunfishes along the Indian Coasts are not common. The various species of sunfishes recorded from the Indian Coasts are : *Ranzania truncata* (Chacko and Mathew, 1956 ; Chappargar, 1964 ; Pradhan, 1965), *Mola mola* (Balakrishnan Nair, MS ; Mohammed Zafar Khan, 1975) and *Masturus lanceolatus* (Kulkarni, 1953).

On 22nd March, 1976 a specimen of sunfish, *Masturus oxyuropterus* (Bleeker) was caught in a shore-seine operated in the Gulf of Mannar at Pudumadam (Lat. 9° 16' N, Long 79° 08' E). This is the first record for this species from the Indian Coast.

Description : The specimen was a male, 880 mm in total length. Distinct concavity of the upper profile of the head, nearly equal bases of dorsal and anal fins, laterally compressed and oval shape of the body, brown colour of the body, presence of a dark more or less distinct band from the base of the dorsal to the base of the clavus and dark spots or blotches on the anal are the diagnostic characteristics of *Masturus oxyuropterus* (Bleeker) (Pl. I A). The morphometric measurements of the fish are given in Table 1. Detailed descriptions of this species are given by Fraser-Brunner (1955) and Weber and de Beaufort (1962).

Distribution : This species is known to occur in Rhio Archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, Bay of Jakarta and Java Sea in the Pacific Ocean and Malaysian waters in the Indian Ocean (Weber and de Beaufort, 1962). The present specimen

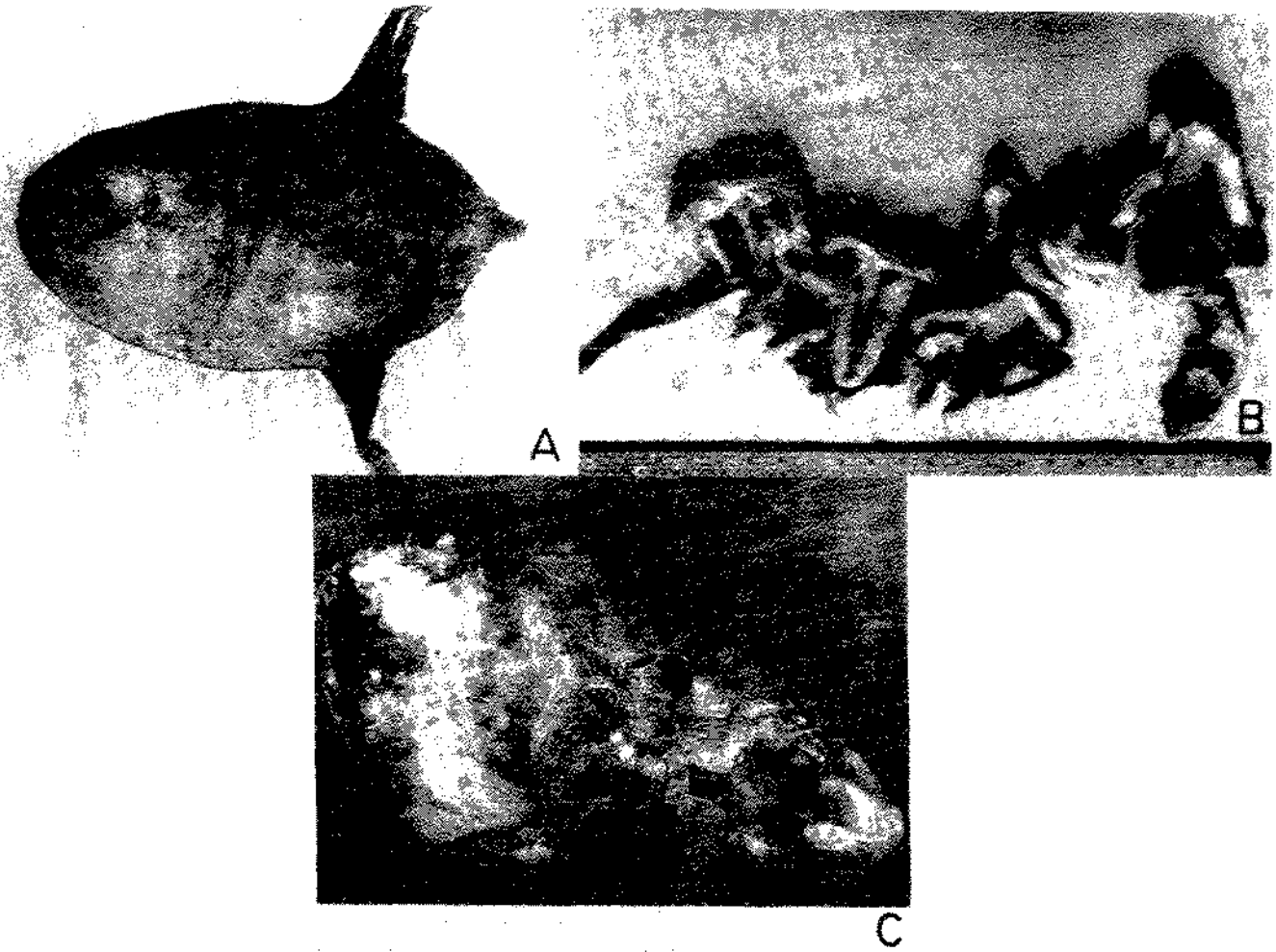


PLATE I. A. Sunfish *Mastomus oxyropterus* (Bleeker); B. long and coiled intestine and C. heavily infested liver with cestode parasites.

from the Gulf of Mannar is the first record of this species in the Indian Seas, and seems to be the second from the Indian Ocean.

TABLE 1. *Morphometric measurements (mm) of male sunfish M. oxyropterus from Pudumadam, Gulf of Mannar*

Total length	..	..	..	..	..	880
Head length	..	..	..	..	..	240
Snout length	..	..	..	..	..	100
Eye diameter	..	..	..	..	..	38
Interorbital width	..	..	..	..	..	125
Snout to insertion of dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	..	535
Snout to insertion of anal fin	..	..	..	..	..	530
Snout to anus	..	..	..	..	..	510
Snout to insertion of pectoral fin	..	..	..	..	..	255
Dorsal to tip of clavus	..	..	..	..	..	430
Insertion of dorsal to insertion of anal fin	..	..	..	..	..	455
Anus to insertion of anal fin	..	..	..	..	..	35
Anus to tip of clavus	..	..	..	..	..	510
Depth at insertion of pectoral fin	..	..	..	..	..	90
Depth at insertion of dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	..	82
Depth at clavus	..	..	..	..	..	50
Height of dorsal	..	..	..	..	..	285
Base of dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	..	128
Height of anal fin	..	..	..	..	..	250
Base of anal fin	..	..	..	..	..	125
Length of pectoral fin	..	..	..	..	..	110
Height of pectoral fin	..	..	..	..	..	50
Length of clavus	..	..	..	..	..	215
Length of intestine	..	..	..	..	..	2920
Diameter of oesophagus	..	..	..	..	..	30
Diameter of middle portion of intestine	..	..	..	..	..	22
Length of anal opening	..	..	..	..	..	15
Weight of fish (kg)	..	..	..	..	..	15
Weight of gonad (gms)	..	..	..	..	..	8
Weight of intestine (gms)	..	..	..	..	..	955
Weight of liver (gms)	..	..	..	..	..	193

Stomach content and parasites: *M. oxyropterus* is reported to be herbivorous (Weber and de Beaufort, 1962). The stomach of the present specimen was empty, yet, the very long and coiled intestine (Pl. I B) measuring 2.920 mm long suggested a herbivorous diet. The liver was club-shaped. The surface layers of the liver was heavily infested with seventy-two blastocysts of *Mollicola horridus* (Goodsir) (Class: Cestoda, family: Gymnorhynchidae) (Pl. I C). *M. horridus* normally infests the liver of the ocean sunfish *Mola mola* (Yamaguti, 1959). The present observation reveals that *M. oxyropterus* is also one of the intermediate hosts of *M. horridus*. Sharks are known to be the definitive hosts of *M. horridus* (Yamaguti, 1959).

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