

Note on range extension of guitarfish *Acroteriobatus variegatus* in Indian seas

The stripenose guitarfish *Acroteriobatus variegatus* (Nair and Lal Mohan, 1973) has been listed as a Critically Endangered (CR) in the IUCN redlist for elasmobranchs. It belongs to the family Rhinobatidae (Rhinopristiformes) and among the 10 species of *Acroteriobatus* found in the western Indian Ocean, is the only endemic guitarfish with a very restricted distribution range, being known only from southern India and Sri Lanka. It is a regular landing by bottomset gillnet at Thengapattinam and Kanyakumari FLC, and occasional landing by trawls in Kochi, Neendakara, Colachel, Muttom and Tuticorin (unpublished data). The size range

observed in the gillnets was between 40.5 and 89.2 cm, whereas it was 55-70 cm Total Length (TL) at Beypore fisheries Harbour, Kerala where it occurs

occasionally in the landings by multiday trawls (Figs.1 & 2).

A single specimen of *A. variegatus*



Fig. 1. Stripenose guitarfish landings at Beypore Fisheries Harbour



Fig.2. Male *A.variegatus* landed at, Beypore Fisheries Harbour in September 2019

was observed in the bycatch of a single day mechanised fish trawler (24 m OAL fitted with 193 Hp engine power) operated at a depth of 70 m off Mandapam (Gulf of Mannar) at a distance of 37 km from the land. The fish was landed at Pamban Therkuvadi Fish Landing Centre, Tamil Nadu on 18th June 2021. The total length, disc width and weight of the fish were 76 cm, 24



Fig. 3. Female *A.variegatus* landed at Pamban Therkuvadi, Tamil Nadu in June 2021

cm and 1.02 kg respectively (Fig. 3). The maximum reported size of this species is 75 cm (Last *et al.*, 2016). The depth of operation recorded off Kozhikode, Kerala for the same species was 50-100 m. The present observation suggests the range extension in its known distribution further north in the Arabian Sea by 180 km and Gulf of Mannar by more than 120 km as the earlier

studies indicated the distribution from Cochin to Tuticorin. The distribution range provided by Kyne *et al.* (2017) needs further confirmation.

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