

## Occurrence of a rare coral fish *Cheilinus undulatus*



*Cheilinus undulatus*, Humphead wrasse

A single specimen of Humphead wrasse *Cheilinus undulatus* (Ruppell, 1835) was landed at Cochin Fisheries Harbour (Kerala) on 23.10.2010 by hooks and lines operated off Lakshadweep. The fish measured 471.5 mm in total length and weighed 1.9 kg. The Humphead wrasse *Cheilinus undulatus* (Riippell, 1835), also

known as Napoleon wrasse, is the biggest member of the family Labridae and a giant among reef fishes. In 1996, this species was listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List due to the rapidly decreasing numbers in the live food market. It is included in the Appendix II of CITES for the countries Fiji, Ireland and the United States of America. In

2004, this species was listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List But still, the exploitation of the species is continuing all over the world due to its high demand in Live Reef Food Fish Trade (LRFFT). There are number of reports about the substantial decline in the stock due to large scale exploitation, in particular, related to its susceptibility to spear fishing and the growth of the LRFFT in which live *C. undulatus* fetches top prices. There are earlier reports of the landings of this species at Cochin Fisheries Harbour and the fish is sold at prices varying from Rs. 100 – 200. Lack of knowledge among the fishers on the importance of this species could be a possible reason for the unwarranted fishing of this species.

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