ON AN INSTANCE OF REDUCED NUMBER OF ANAL SPINES IN *SCOLOPSIS PHAEOPS* (BENNETT) (SCOLOPSIDAE—PISCES)

APART from the principal character of possessing a backwardly directed spine on the suborbital bone, which is also serrated below, one of the features of the family Scolopsidae is the presence of three spines in the anal fin. Occasionally instances are met with in fishes where the number of spines in the anal fin are reduced. Such an instance of abnormality was recorded in *Selaroides leptolepsis* (Cuvier and Valenciennes) by Tandon (1959) and, as far as the author is aware, has not been reported in fishes belonging to other genera.

In the course of the examination of the fishes in the collection of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Centre at Port Blair, a male specimen of *Scolopsis phaeops* measuring 202 mm. in standard length (weight 274 g.) was observed to possess only two spines in the anal fin. This specimen as well as a normal specimen with three anal spines, measuring 169 mm. in standard length (weight 131 g.) have been taken by hook and line from the sea in between Aberdeen Jetty, Port Blair and Ross Island. Unfortunately the exact date of collection of these two specimens is not available. An examination of the abnormal specimen reveals that it resembles very closely the normal specimen in all morphometric measurements expressed in thousands of standard length and meristic counts except in the reduced number of spines in the anal fin. No sign of injury or scar was noticed between the vent and the first anal

spine. Some measurements of the two specimens, converted into thousands of standard length are given below :

	with 3 anal spines	with 2 anal spines
Distance from snout to first anal spine ..	680	678
Distance from vent to first anal spine ..	24	25
Length at base of anal fin ..	148	148
Length of first anal spine ..	47	45
Length of second anal spine ..	83	79
Length of third anal spine	95	—

The close similarity of measurements in both the specimens for the distance from snout to first anal spine as well as the distance from vent to first anal spine suggests that it is the third anal spine and not the first one that is missing in the abnormal specimen. It may also be mentioned that in the normal specimen, the third anal spine which is the longest, measures as long as the diameter of the eye whereas in the abnormal specimen the longest anal spine i.e. the second is much shorter than the diameter of the eye.

Central Marine Fisheries Research Centre,
Port Blair, Andamans.

K. RANGARAJAN

REFERENCE

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