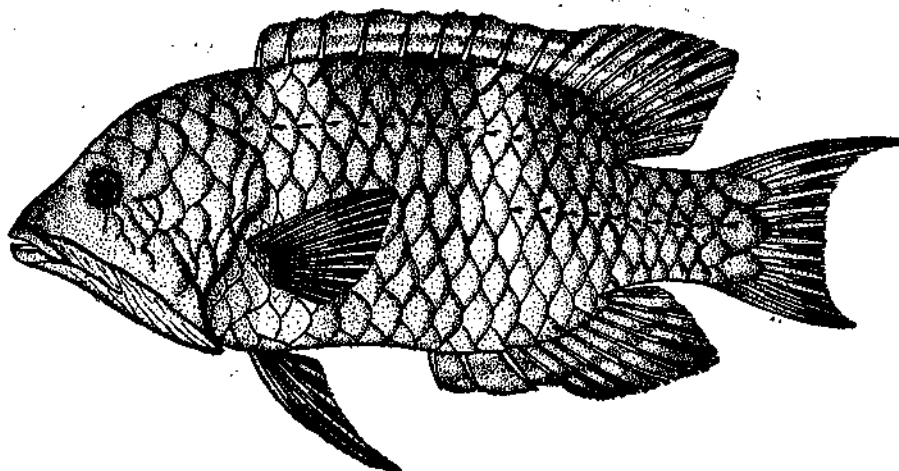


**ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE SLING-JAWED WRASSE,  
*EPIBULUS INSIDIATOR* (PALLAS) ALONG THE SOUTH EASTERN  
COAST OF INDIA**

A SINGLE specimen of *Epibulus insidiator* (Pallas) measuring 208 mm. in total length was collected from the perch-trap catches landed at Kilakarai, Gulf of Mannar (Long. 78° 46'E. Lat. 9° 13'N.) on 19th April 1966. Although the geographical distribution of the species is very wide, extending in the tropical Indo-Pacific region from Tuamutu Islands to the east coast of Africa (Herre, 1963), it has so far not been recorded from the coastal waters of the mainland of India. A juvenile specimen measuring 38 mm. in length from Andaman Islands was described by Day (1878) under *E. striatus*, which was subsequently treated by de Beaufort (1940) as a synonym of *E. insidiator* (Pallas). As the present record of the species from the south eastern coast of India is of distributional interest, a brief description of the specimen collected is given in this note.

*Epibulus insidiator* (Pallas)

*Sparus insidiator* Pallas, 1770, *Spicillogica Zoologica*, 8: 41 (Type locality, Java); *Epibulus insidiator* Günther, 1862, *Cat. Fish. Brit. Mus.*, 4: 135; Jordan and Seale, 1906, *Bull. U.S. Bur. Fish.*, 25: 294; de Beaufort, 1940, *Fishes of the Indo-Australian Archipelago*; 8: 73; Smith, 1949, *Fishes of the Southern Africa*: 520; *Fishes Great Barrier Reef*: 297, *Epibulus striatus* Day, 1878, *Fishes of India*: 395.



*Epibulus insidiator* (Pallas) 208 mm.

D.IX, 11; A.III, 9; P.ii, 11; V.I, 5; Ll.13+10; Ltr. 2+1+6; Gr. 4+1+12.

Head 38.17, height 44.44, postorbital length of head 19.75, longest pectoral ray 22.22, snout to dorsal origin 43.20, in per cent of standard length; Snout 31.00, interorbital space 24.10, Eye 16.2, in per cent of head length.

This species is characterised by the presence of an exceedingly protractile mouth and a remarkably long dentary bone, reaching posteriorly past the gill membranes on the ventral side. Maxillary reaches below hind border of eye. Single row of conical teeth on both the jaws; a pair of canine teeth; pointing forward on each jaw. Scales large. Cheek with three irregular rows of scales. 7 scales before dorsal. Scaly sheath covers bases of the dorsal and anal fins. Dorsal spines short and stout with thick unincised membrane; posterior spines larger than anterior ones. Soft dorsal high and reaches the base of caudal; 7th ray the longest, little more than twice the length of the longest spine. Longest pectoral ray equal to half the height of body. Ventral fins slightly produced, reaching little beyond the origin of anal. Soft anal extends beyond caudal base. Outer rays of caudal, especially the upper rays slightly produced.

Colour brown above, pale below with three vertical dark bands over the body. Pectoral and edges of dorsal and caudal light green. In preserved state, the colour of body is brown and all the fins except pectoral are dark brown.

In the present specimen the second ray of ventral and outer rays of caudal although produced to some extent are not as much produced as illustrated by the

de Beaufort (1940) and Smith (1949), the total length of the specimens figured by them being 335 and 305 mm. respectively. The illustrations given by Day (1878) and Marshall (1964) do not show produced ventral and caudal rays, the total length of the specimens recorded by them being 38 and 127 mm. respectively. Considering the size of the specimens including the present one and the various illustrations given by others, it would appear that the prolongation of the second ray of ventrals and the outer caudal rays in this species is related to age; larger individuals having longer fins.

The specimen has been deposited in the reference Collection Museum of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mandapam Camp (Reg. No. CMFRI. F. 69/537).

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