

CMFRI identifies two more seer fish species in Indian waters



Kochi: In a breakthrough in the marine fisheries sector, the researchers of the ICAR–Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) have identified two more species of seer fish, the most sought-after high-value marine fish.

They discovered one species named Arabian sparrow seer fish (*Scomberomorus avirostrus*) as entirely new to science and resurrected the other, Russell's spotted seer fish (*Scomberomorus leopardus*) which was previously a synonym of the spotted seer fish.

According to the findings by a team of taxonomists led by Dr EM Abdussamad, Principal Scientist of CMFRI, the spotted seer fish (*Scomberomorus guttatus*) that was once considered a single species, is a complex of three distinct species.

These include the newly discovered seer fish, the resurrected seer fish, and the existing spotted seer fish. With this finding, the total number of top-demanding seer fish species in Indian waters rose to six from the existing four species.

This discovery emerged from a comprehensive taxonomic study on spotted seer fish found along the Indian coast. The study highlighted considerable divergence in the morphometry and genetic structure of these fishes collected from different regions of the coast.

The new species was given the common name of Arabian sparrow seer fish by the CMFRI team, owing to its typical bird-beak-like snout. This inhabits the Arabian Sea coast north of Mangalore and its distribution extends up to the Arabian Gulf based on the available scientific information.

Distribution of the other two was along the Bay of Bengal coast north of Nagapattinam, including the Andaman and China seas. These three seer fish species are smaller in size compared to their counterparts and are mostly found in nearshore waters.

Their tasty flavour and high market value make them a prized catch. Dr Abdussamad said this is a significant achievement that adds to the understanding of marine biodiversity and has the potential to contribute to the country's marine fisheries sector in several ways.

"This achievement represents a significant milestone in marine taxonomy and fisheries research, shedding light on the rich and diverse marine life along the Indian coast," he said

These are the fourth and fifth species in the series discovered and gifted by the team to science. Their previous findings include one new species each of barracuda, chub mackerel, and queen fish.