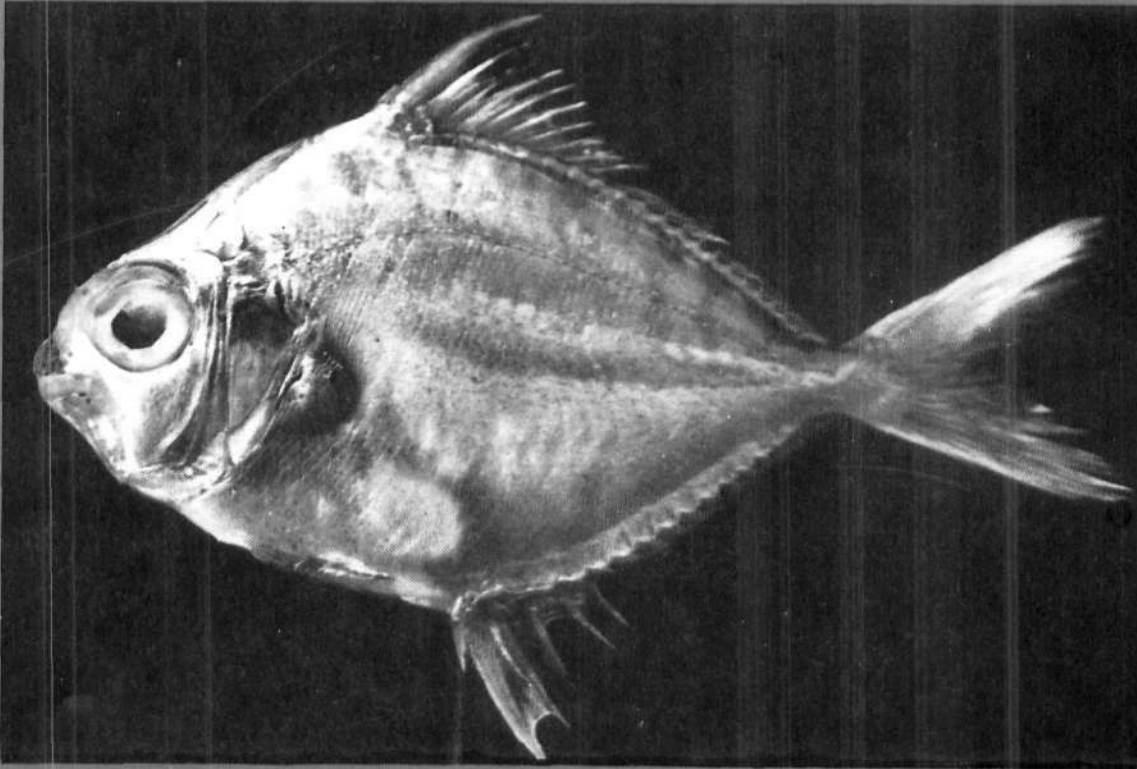




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INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

UNUSUAL CATCH OF CATFISH *TACHYSURUS DUSSUMIERI* IN BOTTOM SET GILL NET AT VERSOVA*

An unprecedented catch of about 3,250 kg of catfish *Tachysurus dussumieri* was landed by a bottom set gill netter at Versova on 23-12-'90. Usually the bottom set gill nets, locally called 'Budi' are operated for pomfret fishery along the north-west coast of India. Normally the duration of fishing trip is about 4-5 days depending upon the catch, ice and diesel. A 62 footer mechanised bottom set gill netter departed Versova village on 21-12-'90 afternoon for fishing and operated on 22-12-'90 at a depth of 45 m off Versova. On the evening when the net was hauled a heavy catch of catfish was realised which was landed on 23-12-'90 (Fig. 1).

The catfish caught in bottom-set gill net is considered as subsidiary catch. However, the present catch of *T. dussumieri* from a single operation is an unusual phenomenon at Versova. Along with catfish, pomfret, *Megalaspis cordyla*, *Chirocentrus* spp. *Hilsa* spp. and elasmobranchs were also landed. The entire catch was transported to the Shivaji wholesale market at Bombay. Table 1 shows the details of catch, rate and value of different components sold.

A total of 113 specimens of *T. dussumieri* were examined for biological aspects. The size ranged from 480 to 670 mm with a dominant mode at 600 mm. The weight of fish ranged from 2 to 4.5 kg. Of the 113 specimens, 81.6% were males and 18.4% females. All the fish were

immature. Majority of stomachs examined were empty. The food items present in the guts, in order of preference, were crabs (78.3%), teleosts



Fig. 1. Part of the catfish catch in entangled form in gill net on deck of the boat.

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Fig. 2. "Budi" type of gill net with wooden floats.

(13.1%) and bivalves (4.1%) indicating them to be bottom feeders.

TABLE 1. Details of catch, rate and value of different component

Species/Group	Estimated catch (kg)	Price (Rs./kg)	Value (Rs.)
<i>Tachysurus dussumieri</i>	3,250	7 - 9	27,400
<i>Megalaspis cordyla</i>	450	2.25 - 2.50	1,215
Pomfret	160	30 - 40	5,200
Others	60	1.5 - 2	105
Total	3,920		33,920

The bottom set gill net was made of monofilament and nylon webbing (Fig. 2). The mesh size range of monofilament webbing was 130-135 mm and nylon 140-145 mm. The length and depth of a single piece of gill net was 45-50 X 6 m. Total of 80 pieces of gill net were operated, of which 20 pieces were of monofilament webbing and 60 of nylon. Enquiry with the fishermen revealed that the bulk of the catfish was caught in Nylon gill net and Pomfret and *M. cordyla* were in monofilament gill net. The monofilament part of the net was in a torn state, hence it is inferred that some catfishes would have managed to escape from it by breaking the mesh.

It can thus be concluded that it would be better to use different types of twine with various mesh sizes to catch different resources for profitable returns.