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ON UNUSUAL HEAVY LANDING OF CAT FISH *TACHYSURUS DUSSUMIERI* (VALENCIENNES) AT KASIMEDU, MADRAS*

During the course of routine observations on the fish landings at Kasimedu, Madras, an unusual catch of about 20 t of cat fishes was recorded from 'Eda valai' (Bag net) netters on 18th August, 1988. Out of that, 14 t was netted in a single haul by 'Eda valai' operated by a catamaran at a depth of 10-15 m. 'Eda valai' is a traditional boat seine usually operated in shallow coastal areas with an extremely wide rectangular mouth or nearly square, measuring 20 m to catch pelagic shoals. The fishes were caught off about 15 km north of Pulicat along the Madras coast (Fig. 1). The remaining catches of 6 t were contributed by six units on the same day (Fig. 2). The cat fishes comprised of only one species namely *Tachysurus dussumieri* (Valenciennes).

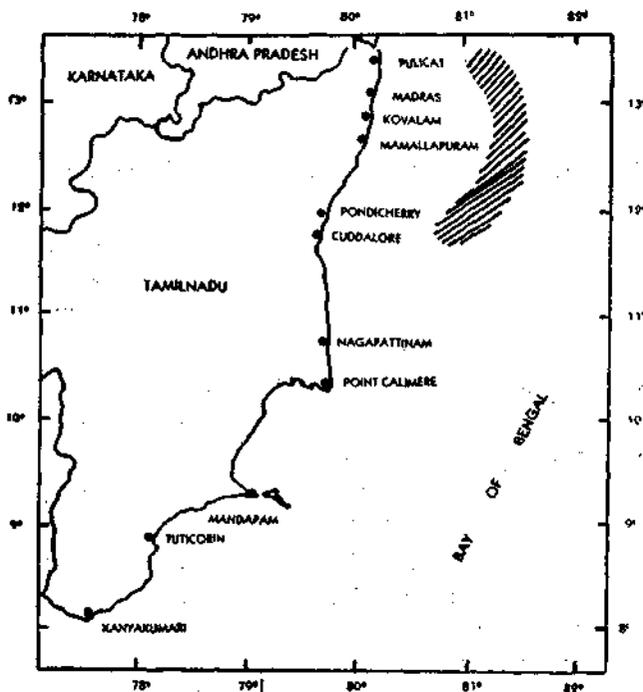


Fig. 1. Map showing Tamilnadu coast and area of fishing at Madras.

The catch of cat fishes was unloaded by carrier boats on the same day evening. About 18 t of the catch was iced and transported to markets at Calicut and Mangalore. The remaining 2 t of fish were sold locally @ Rs. 15 per kg. The fishes weighed 3 to 5 kg each and a total

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number of 5,000 was estimated in the catches. A random sample of 80 cat fishes showed that the size range was from 580-790 mm with a single mode at 710 mm. The females were mostly in spent condition and the males at the maturity stages I & II. The stomachs were found to be empty in the case of males and full in spent females with bivalves as the main food item.

In this context, it may be noted that significant heavy catches of cat fish *Tachysurus dussumieri* (Valenciennes) from 'Mada valai' (Bag net) were noticed by the senior reporter between Cuddalore and Pondicherry along the Tamil Nadu coast from 11th-13th August, 1988. About 820 numbers of cat fishes caught by a single unit of this gear off 10 km south of Pondicherry on 11th August, 1988 and another heavy catch of about 5,000 fishes as revealed by personal enquiries caught by



Fig. 2. Heavy landings of cat fishes by catamarans at Kasimedu, Madras.

several units from the same location landed at Pondicherry on the same day. Further, another shoal of about 8,000 fishes were also caught off Pondicherry on 12th August, 1988. Slight shifting in area of occurrence towards north on the second day and absence of any such catches of cat fishes around this date off Cuddalore in the south therefore suggest a northerly movement of the shoal. The turbidity of the coastal waters was significant during the period of observation. The cat fishes landed at Cuddalore belonged to the size range 600-850 mm and each fish weighed 3-5 kg.