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**Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute**

(Indian Council of Agricultural Research)

Post Box No. 1603, Cochin - 682 018, Kerala, India

[WWW.cmfri.org.in](http://WWW.cmfri.org.in)

# Juvenile croakers - a major component of the low value trawl by-catch landed at Chennai

Shoba Joe Kizhakudan and S. Gomathy

*Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Chennai*

**L**ow value by-catch forms about 10-12% of the trawl landings at Chennai. Fishes form about 60 - 65% of this by-catch. The major fishes occurring

in the by-catch include - silverbellies, cardinal fishes, flatheads, lizardfishes, whitebaits anchovies, croakers, threadfin breams, monocle breams,

flatfishes, dragonets, glassies, rays and skates, goatfishes, pufferfishes, scorpionfishes etc. Juvenile croakers have been found to occur in considerable proportion in the by-catch. *Otolithes ruber*, *Johnius carutta*, *J. belangerii* (Fig. 1) *J. dussumieri*, *Johnieops sina* and *Nibea maculata* dominate the sciaenid assemblage in the low value by-catch. *Kathala*



Fig. 1. *Johnius belangerii* (25-99 mm) from low value trawl by-catch landed at Chennai in July 2007.

*axillaris* and *J. macropterus* have also been recorded in the by-catch. Almost 90% of the sciaenid catch was composed of juveniles. The month-wise species composition and proportion of juveniles for croakers (average for the period July 2005 - December 2007) is given in the table.

Month	Species	Length range (mm)	% of juveniles
January	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	43-99	79
	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	55-112	80
February	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	46-60	100

March	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	57-88	42
April	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	47-108	56
May	No fishing		
June	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	20-116	96
	<i>Johnius carutta</i>	53-105	90
	<i>Kathala axillaris</i>	29-79	100
	<i>Nibea maculata</i>	63-113	87
	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	36-115	96
July	<i>Johnius belangerii</i>	25-99	89
August	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	79-110	75
	<i>Nibea maculata</i>	64-96	97
	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	55-100	75
	<i>Johnius belangerii</i>	27-82	97
	<i>Johnius carutta</i>	100	100
September	<i>Nibea maculata</i>	65-76	100
	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	68-110	80
	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	55-100	85
	<i>Johnius macropterus</i>	100	100
	<i>Johnius belangerii</i>	30-85	100
October	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	72	25
	<i>Johnius dussumieri</i>	148	0
November	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	45-120	88
	<i>Nibea maculata</i>	50-85	100
	<i>Otolithes ruber</i>	78	100
December	<i>Johnieops sina</i>	70-105	100
	<i>Johnius carutta</i>	128	100
	<i>Nibea maculata</i>	62-104	100

Depending on the condition of the catch and the degree of spoilage, the croakers, along with other fishes, are either dried and sold in local markets for human consumption or sold for fish meal production. Larger croakers sorted and sold for drying fetch Rs. 8-10/- per kg. The juveniles are often mixed and sold with other fishes as raw material for fish meal preparation @ Rs. 4-5/- per kg.