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An emerging commercial fishery of *Rachycentron canadum* (Linnaeus, 1766) at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai

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Rachycentron canadum is commonly known as 'cobia' and locally called as 'sakla'. This species is distributed world wide in warm seas except for the eastern Pacific region. It is pelagic but is also found over shallow coral reefs and off rocky shores and occasionally found in estuaries (Fischer and Bianchi, 1984)

Though *R. canadum* has a wide distribution, it never formed a commercial fishery. But of late the landings of this species have increased considerably at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai. Stray landings were occasionally observed but in the year 2007, the landings were considerably high with the estimated annual landings being 110.6 t (Fig. 1). The species was observed throughout the year with a major peak during September - October and a minor peak in February.

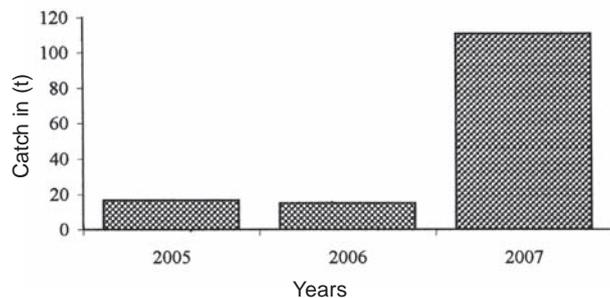


Fig. 1. Annual Landings of *Rachycentron canadum* at New Ferry Wharf

A heavy catch of approximately 2 t of large sized specimens, caught by hooks and lines was landed at New Ferry Wharf on 05.04.08 (Fig. 2). A similar landing but of a lesser magnitude with about one ton was observed on 03.05.08. These hand-operated hook and liners are from southern Tamil Nadu, who fish off Okha coast in Gujarat. Sharks are the targeted fishes using baits such as tuna, cephalopods etc. (Thakur Das *et al.*, 2007), but the unexpected catch of this species during the year has evolved into a



Fig. 2. Landing of *Rachycentron canadum* at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai

totally new resource of very high commercial importance. The catch was sold at the rate of Rs. 80 - 90/- per kg at the landing center generating an added income of Rs. 2,70,000/-. The species of sharks observed along with the catch were *Carcharhinus limbatus*, *Carcharhinus sorrah* and *Galeocerda cuvieri*.

A total of 24 specimens were measured for length-frequency analysis. The total length of the fishes ranged between 123 - 205 cm with the mode in the size group 180 - 189 cm (Fig. 3). The approximate weight ranged between 29 to 95 kg. A similar high catch of the species was recorded by

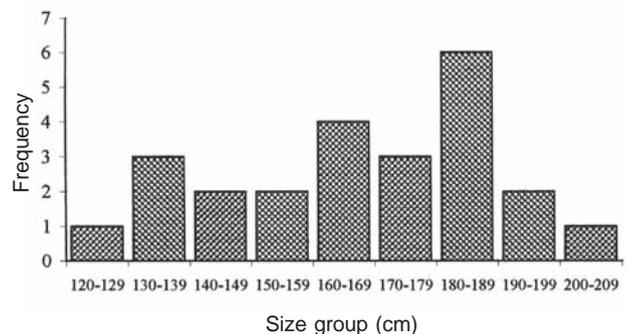


Fig. 3. Size frequency of *Rachycentron canadum*

purse seines at New Ferry Wharf earlier, but of smaller length range from 100 - 169 cm (Jadhav and Chavan, 2004).

A single specimen measuring 205 cm (Fig. 4) in the present observations seems to be the largest record from the Indian waters. Earlier instance of such large specimen was reported from Sasoon Docks that was caught by a gill-netter which measured 121 cm (Kamble *et al.*, 2004). According to Fischer and Bianchi (1984), the maximum size is 200 cm and is common in the fishery at 110 cm. The fish mainly feeds on crabs, squids and fishes.

The sudden increase in the catch of this species has generated a lot of interest among fishermen, more so because of its high commercial returns.



Fig. 4. Specimen of *Rachycentron canadum* measuring 205 cm

Due to the regular availability of this species in good numbers, hook and liners have now started targeting this resource.