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HEAVY LANDINGS OF CAT FISH BY 'DOL' NETS AT SASSOON DOCKS *

Fixed bag net locally called 'dol' is one of the traditional gears used by the fishermen of Maharashtra. Sassoon Docks is one of the major landing centres for 'dol' netters. The chief fishes caught by this net include non-penaeid prawns and Bombay duck. In general the operation of 'dol' net at this centre is restricted to about 20 metres of depth and the catch is brought ashore after one or two hauls.

On 20th January, 1987 at about 0700 hrs huge landing of cat fishes was observed from two 'dol' netters at Sassoon Docks. On enquiry, it was learnt that one of them carried the catch from the fishing ground to Sassoon Docks whereas the catch was netted by the other boat. This particular 'dol' netter set out for fishing at about 1800 hours on the previous day and after two hours of steaming, it reached the fishing ground south-west of Bombay at a place near to Khanderi light house situated at about 16 kms away from Sassoon Docks. The net was operated at a depth of about 12 metres.

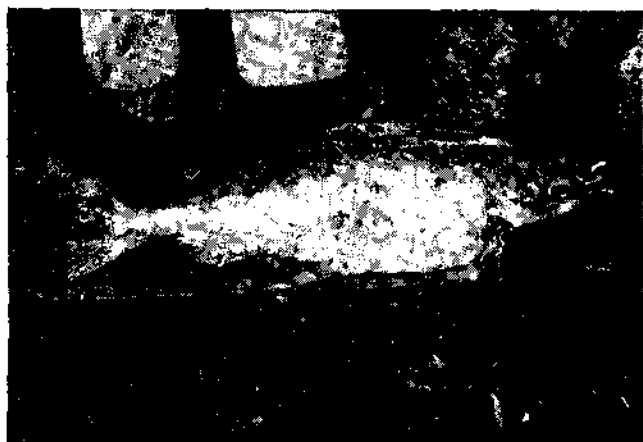


Fig. 1. *Tachysurus dussumieri*.

In one haul lasting about four hours large quantities of cat fishes were caught. As the crew members never expected such a bumper catch they were not adequately

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prepared to carry the catch to Sassoon Docks. In order to transport it to the landing centre they had to hire another 'dol' netter.

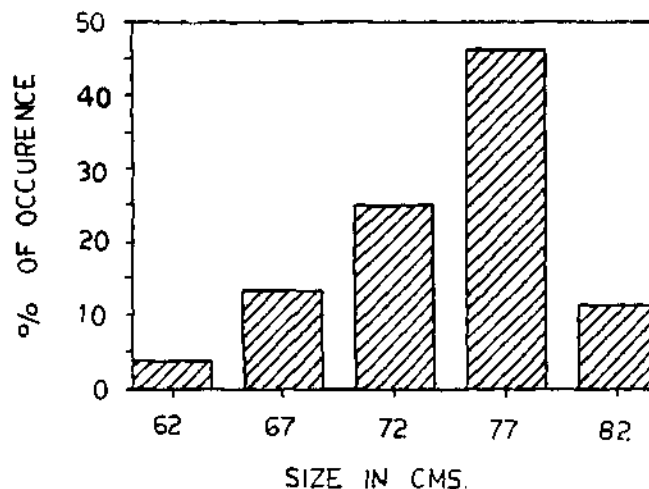


Fig. 2. Size distribution of cat fish, *Tachysurus dussumieri*.

The cat fishes comprised only one species namely *Tachysurus dussumieri*. Total catch during this four hour fishing was 7,655 kg giving a catch per hour of 1,916.25 kg. This boat operated three nets at the fishing ground. Each fish weighed 6 to 9 kg and total number was 1,095. Length measurements were taken for a sample of 52 catfishes and the size ranged from a minimum of 65 to a maximum of 88.5 cm (Fig. 1).

The entire catch was sold by auction at the landing centre itself for a price of Rs. 32,850 at a rate of Rs. 30/- per fish. These fishes were in turn sent to Crawford market, Bombay.

In general cat fishes are rarely caught by 'dol' netters. Annual catch figures from 1983 to 1986 show that cat fishes contributed only two per cent of the 'dol' net catches. This fish is mainly caught by hooks and line and trawlers. Sudden catch of this species by 'dol' net has generated good deal of interest among the fishermen as well as scientists.

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