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A NOTE ON THE RARE SNAGGLE TOOTH SHARK, *HEMIPRISTIS ELONGATUS**

The snaggle tooth shark also known as fossil shark, *Hemipristis elongatus* is a very rare species found along the continental shelf of Indian coasts at a depth of upto 30 m. At present it appears to be the only living species under the genus *Hemipristis*. The shark attains a length of 218 cm in Indian waters. The shark is caught in gill net fisheries along our coasts. The meat is used fresh for human consumption and fins for export.

Fourteen sharks including six males and eight females were collected from gill net catches off Madras coast over a period of one year (Table 1). Two female sharks were found to be pregnant and three with full stomach. The sizes of sharks ranged from 130 to 220 cm.

H. elongatus is a live-bearing species, the embryos being nourished by yolk-sac placenta. In the present case the embryos were in advanced stage of development and exactly similar to the adult except in the development of teeth. A litter of five embryos was taken from one female shark and six embryos were taken from one female shark and six embryos from another female shark. Particulars on the total length, sex and umbilical cord of the embryos are given in Table 2. The second dorsal is conspicuously black tipped, a character which becomes fainter and ultimately disappears as the shark grows to adult. The umbilical cord is provided all along its length with closely set small hair like protuberances from the point of attachment with

the foetus to the placenta (Fig. 1). There is reason to believe that as the embryo grows in size, the length of umbilical cord becomes shorter (Table 2).

In the adult females, the uteri on both sides are functional. The posterior part of the oviduct is dilated and contains the embryos. Each embryo is enclosed separately in a membrane filled with embryonic fluid. The embryos are positioned with tail folded upwards in the form of U. The head of the foetus points towards the anterior side of

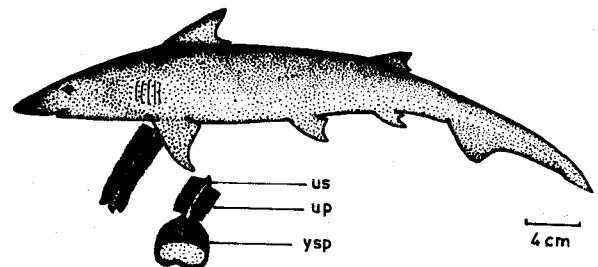


Fig. 1. Full term embryo, 495 mm in TL of *Hemipristis elongatus* us: umbilical stalk, up: umbilical papillae and ysp: yolk sac placenta.

the mother. The ventral side of the embryo is found to face the ventral side of the mother.

In most of the sharks, the stomach contained only digestive juice. Only three sharks had their stomach full. In one stomach, one small shark, *Scotiodon laticaudus* of 27.5 cm in

TABLE 2. Particulars of embryos taken from the mother sharks *H. elongatus* 200 cm and 180 cm in TL on 1-9-90 & 9-10-90*

Sl No.	Length of embryo (mm)	Sex	Length of umbilical cord (mm)
Date: 1-9-90			
1	435	M	290
2	480	M	280
3	495	F	280
4	510	M	230
5	515	M	230
Date: 9-10-90			
1	440	M	290
2	450	F	290
3	475	F	280
4	495	F	280
5	510	M	235
6	510	F	230
Average	48.30		

total length was recorded. In another, two small rays, *Dasyatis imbricatus* (185 mm and 195 mm across in disc width) were observed. In the third, partly digested teleost fishes were seen.

TABLE 1. Occurrence of *Hemipristis elongatus* along Madras Coast: Dates of capture and other details

Sl No.	Date	TL of sharks (cm)	Sex	Stage of maturity
1	20-6-90	185	F	Mature
2	2-7-90	140	M	Immature
3	1-9-90	200	F	Pregnant
4	9-10-90	180	F	Pregnant
5	9-11-90	175	M	Mature
6	11-1-91	180	F	Mature
7	18-1-91	145	M	Maturing
8	8-2-91	200	F	Mature
9	19-2-91	195	F	Mature
10	5-3-91	155	M	Mature
11	16-3-91	160	F	Mature
12	19-3-91	175	M	Mature
13	3-4-91	145	M	Immature
14	10-5-91	220	F	Mature

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