

ON A LARGE SUNFISH *RANZANIA TYPUS* FROM THE SOUTHWEST COAST

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A sunfish (or trunkfish), *Ranzania typus*, measuring 616 mm total length and a maximum depth of 310 mm was caught at Erayumanthurai on the southwest coast (Kanyakumari district, Tamil nadu) on 2-3-1984 in a shore seine. The gear had operated a distance of 1 km from the shore, up to a depth of 22 m. Coloured bluish, tending towards dark above and to silvery below, it had a smooth skin with small hexagonal plates. Six streaks of lighter colour with darker borders, emanated from near the dorsal margin between the snout and the gill slit, curved downwards to the ventral profile. The posterior three streaks were branched and contained dark spots, mostly round. Lips were produced forwards beyond teeth as a funnel, closing in a vertical slit.

The specimen was a male, weighing 8 kg, with a fully developed gonad. The stomach was quarter full, containing completely digested matter. This species, according to Smith (1961), occurs in all oceans and attains 30 inches (762 mm) in length, and, according to Munro (1955), is found in coastal waters

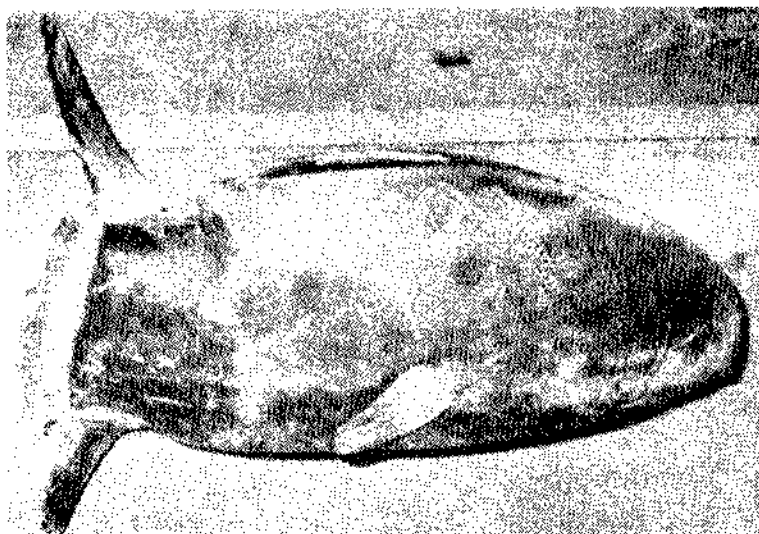


FIG. 1. The sunfish *Ranzania typus* caught at Kanyakumari.

attaining 32 inches (813 mm). This monospecific genus, *Ranzania*, is readily distinguished from its closely related genus, *Mola*, by its relatively elongate body with its depth twice in total length, whereas in *Mola* it is 1 to 1.1.

The measurements of the fish were: Total length: 616 mm. Depth of body: 310 mm. Head length (snout to posterior margin of gillslit): 238 mm. Length of dorsal fin: 101 mm. Length of pectoral fin: 118 mm. Length of anal fin: 152 mm. Snout to pectoral origin: 238 mm. Snout to front border of eye: 90 mm. Maximum eye diameter: 35 mm. Hind border of eye to pectoral origin: 113 mm. Width of gill slit: 32 mm. Length of pectoral base: 30 mm. Length of dorsal base: 62 mm. Length of anal base: 52 mm.

MUNRO, 1955. *The Marine and Freshwater Fishes of Ceylon*.

SMITH, J. L. B. 1961. *The Sea Fishes of Southern Africa*.