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## ON THE OCCURRENCE OF RED-BAITS IN THE INDIGENOUS BOAT SEINE FISHERY OFF MADRAS\*

The red-baits *Dipterygonotus leucogrammicus* Bleeker of the family Emmelichthyidae is one of the important live baits used in the pole and line tuna fishery in Lakshadweep during January to April. Though the species has been reported along the coastal waters of the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Bay regions, no reports are available on the abundant occurrence of these fishes either in the mechanised trawler or indigenous fishing units. The present report deals with an unusual landing of the red-baits in the indigenous boat seine fishery at Kottivakkamkuppam landing centre near Madras on 11-10-1989.

The indigenous boat seines, locally called *thuri valai* are operated with two catamarans and five crew members at a distance of 3-5 km from the shore in a depth range of 10-20 metres. On 11-10-1989, all the 12 boat seine units operated during the afternoon hours landed with an unusual catch of the red-baits, *D. leucogrammicus* besides the ribbonfish *Trichiurus lepturus* and other assorted fishes. Table 1 indicates the unit-wise catch of the red-baits and its percentage contribution to the total landings. The observations revealed that in almost all units, red-baits constituted more than 50% of the catch. It was also noted from the estimated landings that the red-baits comprised nearly one tonne constituting 66% of the total landings of the day. Subsequent observations on the following two days revealed only sporadic occurrence of red-baits in the landings.

\* Reported by P.K. Mahadevan Pillai, Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Madras.

Table 1. The abundance of red-baits in relation to other groups in different boat seine units landed on 11-10-1989 (in kg)

Sl. No. of units	Red-baits	Ribbon fishes	Others	Total	Percentage of red-baits to total catch
1	80	60	2	142	56
2	30	75	2	107	28
3	120	48	3	171	70
4	85	20	3	108	79
5	70	43	3	116	60
6	110	60	2	172	64
7	250	35	4	289	87
8	25	20	2	47	53
9	60	24	4	88	68
10	30	25	3	58	52
11	35	36	1	72	49
12	50	21	1	72	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1,442</b>	<b>66</b>

Local information gathered suggest that such heavy landings of red-baits are not common. Length measurements of a sample taken indicated the length range of 55-86 mm in the landings with the predominance of 71-75 mm size group. Since no ready market was available for red-baits in fresh condition, the entire catch was put to sundrying on the beach.

Being one of the important tuna live baits, the unusual occurrence of red-baits along the shallow coastal waters off Madras deserves special attention.

