

OCCURRENCE OF YOUNG MACKEREL, *RASTRELLIGER CANAGURTA* (CUVIER) OFF MADRAS COAST

THE occurrence of young mackerel, *Rastrelliger canagurta* (*Scomber microlepidotus* of Day, 1876) which we have noticed in large numbers on 21st and 23rd March and on 20th April 1953 in the shore-seine catches on the Madras Coast is worthy of record. It is not uncommon to find young mackerel along the West Coast of India in the months of July to September (Chidambaram *et al.*, 1952; Bhimachar and George, 1952; Panikkar, 1952). The spawning habits of the Indian mackerel are not fully understood, but it is fairly clear from the various observations of previous workers that the spawning period extends from May or June to September on the West Coast. Our observations seem to be the first on record showing that young mackerel occur during March-April period along the East Coast.

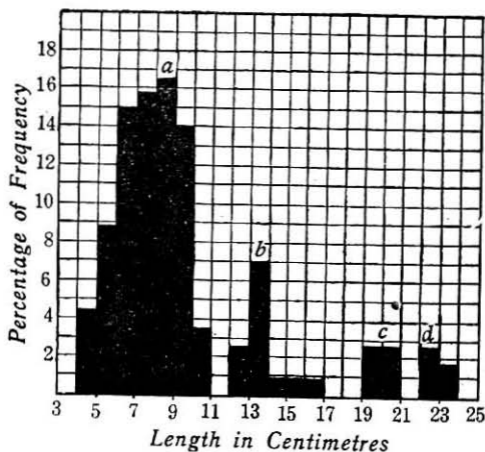


FIG. 1. Size-frequency distribution of the Indian Mackerel, *Rastrelliger canagurta* off Madras coast in March-April, 1953.

A fairly large sample of young mackerel was collected by us on 21st March 1953, when they were abundant in the shore seines amounting to 60-80 lb. in each haul. Another random sample of juvenile and adult mackerel was collected on the 17th of April 1953 from the boat-seine catches. These two samples were combined, and the whole was treated to represent the entire population of the species occurring in the inshore waters of the Madras Coast during the period of March-April under observation. It may be seen from the figure that the predominant size-group of young mackerel (a) is at 8-9 cm. in length, and the maximum and the minimum sizes noticed by us among this group are 10.3 cm. and 4.9 cm. respectively. The catch obtained in the boat-seines showed a wide variation in sizes ranging from 9.7 cm. to 23.4 cm. The juvenile and adult mackerel of the sample fall into three definite groups with peak values of 13-14 cm. (b), 20 cm. (c) and 22-23 cm. (d). There is a similarity in the occurrence of young mackerel from July to September following the south-west monsoon on the West Coast, and from March onwards following the north-east monsoon on the East Coast. One of us working at Vizagapatam on the East Coast has previously observed young mackerel varying from 10-14 cm. in June in both the years 1951 and 1952.

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Central Marine Fisheries K. VIRABHADRA RAO.
Research Unit, S. BASHEERUDDIN.
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