

Rare occurrence of deepsea snake mackerel off Nagapattinam coast in the Bay of Bengal

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Lepidocybium flavobrunneum (Smith, 1843) has a wide distribution in tropical and temperate seas of the world. The species is considered to be benthopelagic in occurrence between 200 and 1000 m, depth, and probably not reported to occur in the northern Indian Ocean. Balasubramanian (2007) reported on the occurrence of this species during 2004-06 in the landings of large meshed gillnets operated off Tuticorin coast in the Gulf of Mannar. A catch of 4 specimens of *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum* (Fig. 1) belonging to the family Gempylidae (snake mackerels) were observed at Chennai Fisheries Harbour on 5.3.2009. The total length of these specimens varied between 423 and 581 mm with total weight ranging between 520 and 1320 g. These specimens formed part of the landings by Thangal (voyage fishing) trawlers operated at a depth of 150-250 m along the north-east coast of Nagapattinam at a distance of 250-300 km from Chennai. The morphological appearance of *L. flavobrunneum* is almost like seerfish but the colour is dark brown and becoming black with advancing

age. Prominent lateral keel on caudal peduncle, flanked by smaller accessory keels above and below were observed. Its stomach was found to be empty and the gonad was immature. This species is found to migrate vertically at night. It is marketed in fresh condition with or without ice and sometimes as dried fish and sold at rates varying between Rs. 50 – 70 in the local markets.



Fig. 1. *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*