

Heavy landings of yellowfin tuna *Thunnus albacares* (Bonnaterre, 1788) by hooks and line off Chennai coast

S. Mohan, S. Rajapackiam and R.Vasu
Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Chennai

Tunas are commercially important fish and widely but sparsely distributed throughout the oceans of the world, generally in tropical and temperate waters. They are grouped taxonomically in the family Scombridae, which includes about 50 species. The most important of these in commercial and recreational fisheries are yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) (Fig. 1), skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), bluefin tuna (*T. tonggol*), frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*) mackerel tuna (*Euthynnus affinis*) and striped bonito (*T. orientalis*). They are exploited mainly by hooks and line, mechanised gillnets and trawlnets in India.

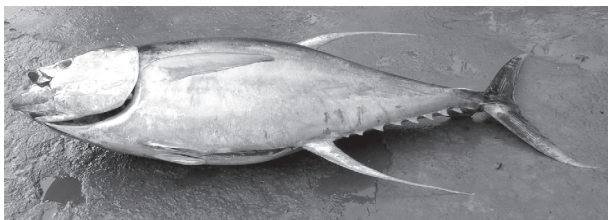


Fig. 1. *Thunnus albacares*

They school primarily by size, either in monospecific or multi-species groups. Larger fish frequently school with whales, feed on fishes, crustaceans and squids. It is sensitive to low concentrations of oxygen and therefore it is not usually caught below 250 m in the tropics. Peak spawning occurs during the summer.

During January - March 2009, heavy landings of yellowfin tuna was observed at Chennai Fisheries Harbour and the catches were 15.0 t, 56.0 t and 73.5 t respectively. Maximum catch recorded on a single day was 5.5 t on 03.03.2009. Hooks and line were operated at a depth of 80-120 m in the north-east direction off Chennai. Yellowfin tuna formed 80-90% of the total catch whereas other catches included sailfish, carangids, seerfish and groupers. The tuna catch was auctioned at the rate of Rs. 80 per kg. Fishes were cleaned, gill rakers removed and degutted (Fig. 2). The cleaned fish were transported to Kerala for high value export market .



Fig. 2. Gillrakers and stomach being removed from yellowfin tuna