Unusual heavy landing of billfishes at Chennai

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Billfishes are regularly landed by mechanised gillnets and hooks and line at Chennai Fisheries Harbour. An estimated catch of 65 t, 80 t, and 60 t of billfishes were landed by mechanised gillnets during July, August and September 2010 respectively. On 24.06.2010, about 5 t of billfishes were landed unusually by mechanised gillnets operated at a depth of 50-60 m in the north-east direction.

Among the billfishes, Indo-Pacific sailfish *Istiophorus platypterus* (Shaw, 1792) locally called as “mayil kola” dominated the catch followed by the Pacific black marlin *Makaira indica* (Cuvier, 1832) locally called as “emen kola” and swordfish *Xiphias gladius* (Linnaeus, 1758) locally called as “panni kola”.

About 90% of the billfish catches were recorded in mechanised gillnetters, and remaining 10% were landed by hooks and lines. The large size billfishes were landed by mechanised gillnetters, whereas the smaller ones were landed by hooks and lines. Fishes were auctioned and taken to the sheds for removing the head portion, dorsal fin and gut. Flesh portion was cut into pieces, preserved in ice and transported to Kerala.

Table 1. Particulars of billfishes landed on 24.06.2010 by mechanised gillnetters at Chennai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Catch (kg)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Size range (mm)</th>
<th>Weight range (kg)</th>
<th>Price (₹/kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I. platypterus</em></td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>120-329</td>
<td>20-65</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M. indica</em></td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>180-349</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>80-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>X. gladius</em></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>80-149</td>
<td>12-25</td>
<td>40-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heavy landing of tomato hind *Cephalopholis sonnerati* (Valenciennes, 1828) at Chennai

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Heavy landing of the tomato hind, *Cephalopholis sonnerati* (Valenciennes, 1828), locally called ‘thakkali kalava’ or ‘sivappu kalava’ (Fig.1), was recorded at Chennai Kasimedu Fisheries Harbour in July 2008 and August 2009. About 7.8 t were landed in July 2008 by mechanised trawlers (multiday thangal trawlers) operated south-east of Chennai, at 70-80 fathom depth, at a distance of 50-60 km. On 10-07-2008, 1.6 t of *C. sonnerati* was landed along with *Epinephelus tauvina* (1.0 t), and *Epinephelus malabaricus* (0.6 t). A total of 3.2 t of *C. sonnerati* was landed in August 2009, forming 5.5% of the serranid landings during that year.
The size range of *C. sonnerati* was 275-520 mm (TL), with the dominant mode at 400-449 mm. The weight ranged from 0.3 to 2 kg.

The catches were sold at ₹ 80 per kg. Before packing in ice, the head portion including gills was bound with a rubber band to prevent water (from the ice) entering into the gill opening. This ensured retaining the red colour of the gills. The fishes were transported to Kerala for export.

**Record of the squat lobster *Munidopsis scobina* Alcock, 1894 off Chennai coast**

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In the deep sea catches landed at Kasimedu Fisheries Harbour on 10th and 25th March 2011, one male and three female specimens (Fig. 1 and 2) of squat lobster were observed. They were identified as *Munidopsis scobina* Alcock, 1894. The male specimen, which was caught at 200-400 m depth range, off Chennai coast along with deep sea shrimps, lobsters and fishes, measured 44 mm in total length (TL) and 21 mm in carapace length (CL). The females measured 45, 40 (berried) and 35 mm in TL and 24, 21 and 17 mm in CL. The colour of the body was orange with white horizontal bands on carapace and edges of abdominal segments. The telson was light orange in colour. The eggs were large and yellow in colour, carapace with dorsal spines and interrupted striae after the cervical groove, the rostrum smooth, eyes small and movable. It has been recorded from Andaman Sea at 439 m in 1894, Bay of Bengal at 265-458 m in 1894, northern end of Bay of Bengal at 353-748 m in 1901, and off Kollam at 180-400 m in 1974. The present record in 2011 is from Chennai coast at 200-400 m.