

First record of the dogtooth tuna, *Gymnosarda unicolor*, Ruppell from Tuticorin

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Tuticorin is known for tuna fishing since long. There has been a gradual change in the species composition, period of occurrence and magnitude of tuna landings, consequent to changes in fishing pattern and expansion of fishing grounds. According to Hornell (1917), *Euthynnus affinis* was the common tuna species caught off Tuticorin. Later, Silas (1962) recorded five species (*Euthynnus affinis*, *Thunnus albacares* and *Thunnus tonggol* as common and *Auxis thazard* and *Katsuwonus pelamis* as sporadic) with the major gear used being multiple trolling line. Siraimetan (1985) recorded seven species viz., *E. affinis*, *A. thazard*, *Auxis rochei*, *Sarda orientalis*, *T. albacares*, *T. tonggol* and *K. pelamis*. There is a shift in the pattern of fishing from troll line fishery to gillnet fishery, troll lines being operated only when the use of gillnets is temporarily suspended. Even with the introduction of multiday drift gillnet fishing in 2000, which are operated in depths above 300 m, the tuna species landed comprised only the above mentioned seven species (Abdussamad *et al.*, 2006). Thus the present report is the first one on the occurrence of *Gymnosarda unicolor* from Tuticorin adding the total number of tuna species caught along the Tuticorin coast to eight.

Landing of 15 numbers of *G. unicolor* was observed for the first time on 9th May 2012 in the drift gillnet catches at Punnakkayal. The landing was again observed on 13th June 2012 and totally 50 numbers were landed. They were caught 20 nautical miles straight off Punnakkayal from a depth of 25 m. It is said that 15 min ride from this ground will lead to areas above 100 m depth. *G. unicolor* is identified by its prominent lateral line that arch over pectoral fin, large conical teeth and naked body with no lines or markings (Fig.1a and b). The length of fishes landed ranged from 40 to 42 cm FL (Fig. 2) and weight from 0.95 to 1.125 kg. Male to female ratio was 1:0.6 and all belonged to immature stage II. The stomach contents comprised digested fish remains.



Fig. 1a. *Gymnosarda unicolor*



Fig. 1b. Head of *G. unicolor* showing teeth

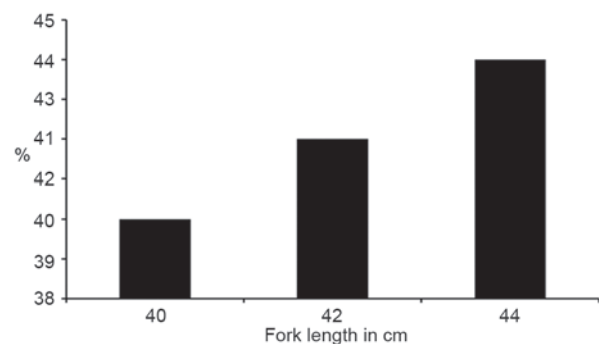


Fig. 2. Length frequency of *G. unicolor* landed at Tuticorin