

Pelagic sting ray, *Pteroplatytrygon violacea* (Bonaparte, 1832) landed at Tuticorin

K. Kannan, L. Ranjith, K. Sureshkumar, K. P. Kandan, K. John James,
S. Mohamed Sathakkathullah and M. S. Madan
Research Centre of CMFRI, Tuticorin

Pelagic sting ray, *Pteroplatytrygon violacea* (Bonaparte, 1832) belongs to the family Dasyatidae (largest stingray family) and the family comprises 8 genera and 89 valid species (Froese and Pauly, 2012). In Indian waters, about 50 species of rays have been recorded so far, of which 18 species belong to the family Dasyatidae (Raje *et al.*, 2002; 2007). In India, *P. violacea* has been previously reported by Akhilesh *et al.* (2008) and Zacharia *et al.* (2009). As this is the first report of male *P. violacea* from the east coast of India, a detailed morphometric comparison is presented here (Table 1).

On 12th February, 2013 a single specimen of *P. violacea* (Fig. 1 and 2) measuring 100 cm (total length) with a weight of 2090 g was caught in large meshed gillnet, locally called as Paruvalai operated from Vallam (type of plank built boats of Tuticorin) at Tharuvaikulam landing centre in Tuticorin. The gear was operated between 100 and 150 m depth, at a distance of 50 to 60 nautical miles off the coast. The landed specimen was brought to the laboratory of Tuticorin Research Centre of CMFRI for further investigations.

Table 1. Morphometric comparison (% of total length in mm) of *Pteroplatytrygon violacea* captured off Tuticorin coast with specimens caught from Arabian Sea off Cochin (Akhilesh *et al.*, 2008) and North Sea (Ellis, 2007)

Morphometric Characters	Tuticorin coast (Male)	Arabian Sea (off Cochin) (Male)	North Sea (Male)
Total length	100	102	99.5
Disc width	44.9	46.08	42.2
Disc length	34.41	34.31	33.7
Pre-orbital length	7.1	5.49	5.3
Eye diameter	2.11	1.57	1.6
Inter-orbital distance	3.82	6.57	4.1
Pre-spiracular distance	9.23	7.35	6.9
Length of spiracle	2.63	2.55	2.2
Inter-spiracular distance	7.57	7.65	7.7
Pre-narial distance	5.44	5.1	4.8
Inter-narial distance	4.56	4.41	4.2
Pre-oral distance	6.59	6.27	6.3
Mouth width	5.15	5.39	4.9
Interspace first gill slits	8.79	8.82	8.5
Interspace fifth gill slits	5.85	6.47	6
Snout to first gill opening	12.3	11.37	10.8
Snout to fifth gill opening	16.19	16.57	15.7
Snout to cloaca (anterior) distance	29.39	29.9	29.6
Cloaca (anterior) to end of the tail	69.01	70.1	71.4
External clasper length	7.7	6.18	5.5

Fig. 1. *Pteroplatytrygon violacea* caught off Tuticorin (dorsal view)Fig. 2. *Pteroplatytrygon violacea* caught off Tuticorin (ventral view)

Description

The body is thick, wider than long with purple dark coloration on the dorsal and ventral surfaces of the broad wedge shaped thick disc. Disc surface is normally without any granulations. Snout broad, small terminal lobe present, anterior margin evenly convex. Eye very small with thick eyelid, inter-orbital space very broad. Nostrils short and circular. Mouth small with numerous short, bifurcated papillae in continuous row across floor; prominent labial furrows and folds, lower jaw weakly convex. Single spine in the tail. Single row of small, short, sharp thorns commencing

near nuchal area. The specimen is identified as *P. violacea* based on morphological and morphometrics of the male representatives described from North Sea (Ellis, 2007) and Arabian Sea (Akhilesh *et al.*, 2008)

The species is distributed in tropical and subtropical Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the last few years the species has also been reported from very shallow waters, close to shore (Vaske and Rotundo, 2012). *P. violacea* is listed in the IUCN Red List of the Threatened Species, as "Least Concern", however the stock status of the species needs to be carefully monitored.