

Large sized oilfish *Ruvettus pretiosus* (Cocco, 1833) ever recorded from Gulf of Mannar, south-east coast of India

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Ruvettus pretiosus belonging to the Family Gempylidae of perciform fishes is closely related to Scombridae. Gempylidae fishes are commonly called as snake mackerels or escolars and this family has 16 genus and 24 valid species. *R. pretiosus* is one

of the large sized fishes with the maximum record of 300 cm total length (Nakamura and Parin, 1993). It is benthopelagic, reported to be distributed along the tropical and temperate seas of the world. Venu and Kurup (2006) reported the occurrence of snake

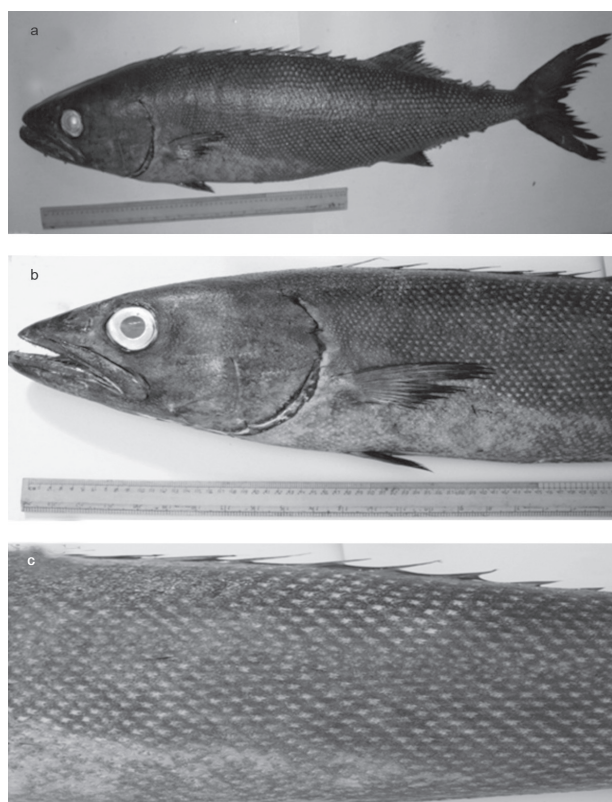


Fig. 1. *Ruvettus pretiosus* caught off Tuticorin coast, Gulf of Mannar (a) Lateral view, (b) Close view of head, (c) Close view of spinous bony tubercle

mackerel in deeper waters along the west coast of India. In south-east coast of India, Balasubramanian and Abdussamad (2007) reported six species from the Family Gempylidae.

On 7th December, 2012 a single specimen of *R. pretiosus* measuring 121.3 cm (total length) with a weight of 9000 g was landed by large meshed gillnet, locally called as Paruvalai operated from traditional fishing craft, vallam (a type of plank built boats of Tuticorin) at Tharuvaikulam landing centre. The gear was operated between 100 and 150 m depth, at a distance of 50 to 60 nautical miles from the coast.

The landed specimen was brought to the laboratory of Tuticorin Research Centre of CMFRI for further investigations. The fish body is elongate with large eyes, canine like teeth, rigid scaly keel on belly, no keels on caudal peduncle, lateral line single, and cycloid scales interspersed with rows of spinous bony tubercles which make the skin very rough to touch. The body colour is uniformly brown to dark

brown, pectoral and pelvic fin tips black. The detailed morphometric and meristic characters of the specimen are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Morphometric and meristics features of *Ruvettus pretiosus*

Morphometric characters	Measurement (mm)
Total length	1213
Standard length	1014
Head length	280
Eye diameter	49
Snout length	102
Upper jaw length	145
Lower jaw length	150
Pre-dorsal length	258
Pre-pectoral length	280
Pre-pelvic length	320
Pre-anal length	730
Meristics characters	Number
First dorsal fin	XIV
Second dorsal fin	18
Dorsal finlets	2
Pectoral fin rays	13
Pelvic fin rays	5
Anal fin rays	18
Anal finlets	2

Mohan *et al.* (2011) reported occurrence of *R. pretiosus* (total length - 550 mm) at Chennai coast in the year 2009. Along Tuticorin coast, the occurrence of *R. pretiosus* coincides with onset of deep sea fishing season; during November and December (Balasubramanian and Abdussamad, 2007; Mohan *et al.*, 2011). The species generally fetches low price in the local market, perhaps due to its high oil content *i.e.*, 20% by weight contains indigestible wax esters which contribute 90% of the fat content (Yohannes, 2002) and is mostly sundried after removing the skin. In Australia, the consumption of oilfish caused food poisoning outbreaks resulting in diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, headache and vomiting (Shadbolt *et al.*, 2002).