

## On the first record of the scorpion fish, *Scorpaenopsis lactomaculata* (Herre, 1945) from inshore waters of Veraval, Gujarat

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*Scorpaenopsis lactomaculata* (Herre, 1945) belongs to the family Scorpaenidae and commonly known as Scorpion fish. As the name suggests, scorpion fish have a type of “sting” in the form of sharp spines coated with venomous mucus. They are widespread in tropical and temperate seas, but mostly found in the Indo-Pacific. Originally *Scorpenopsis lactomaculata* (Herre, 1945) was assigned under the genus *Scorpaena* Herre, 1945. Later it was changed to *Scorpaenopsis* due to the presence of small minute scales in the pelvic area and absence of palatine teeth. *S. lactomaculata* is a demersal inshore species which is distributed in the western Indian ocean in between 30° E - 80° E; 45° S - 30° N. (Froese and Pauly, 2009). Earlier, it has been reported from India (shallow waters of Bombay), Iran and Pakistan (West of Karachi). Though the species (locally known as “Wekhli”) is mainly caught by hook and lines, a small portion of the catch is also landed as trawl by-catch along the Saurashtra coast.

The specimens for the present study were collected during 5<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 from the boats locally called as ‘Hodi’ (length-20ft) which



Fig 1. White blotched Scorpion fish (*Scorpenopsis lactomaculata*) (Herre, 1945) from Veraval

were operated in the inshore waters at a depth range of 10-20 m by artisanal fishermen. The fishes were caught along with the species of snappers (*Lutjanus johnii* and *L. russelli*), groupers (*Cephalopis formosa* and *Epinephelus bleekerii*) and emperor breams (*Lethrinus letjan* and *L. elongatus*) by hook and line. The study is based on 5 specimens measuring 155-211 mm (TL) with a weight of 65-182 g. The morphometric measurements and meristic counts of the specimens were collected after which the specimens were preserved in 5 % formalin and kept in the museum of Veraval regional centre of CMFRI for future reference (Table 1).

The current species is identified following the description given by Randall and Eschmeyer, 2001. The body of the collected specimen of *S. lactomaculata* is deep, robust and reddish brown in color. The head is large and spiny with a long snout and spiny opercle. Space between opercular spines is naked. Sub orbital ridge is having a single row of three spines. Dorsal fin is reddish brown with white streaks and other fins with numerous brown spots on fin rays. Fourth spine on dorsal fin is the longest spine observed in all the samples where the first dorsal spine is shorter than the second. Body was covered with ctenoid scales. Mouth was terminal with toothless palate. The specimen became uniformly pale brownish after preserving in formalin. The ratios of different morphometric measurements are: Head length 33-37 % of SL, snout length 26.6 -30.66 % of HL, eye diameter 11.1-12 % of HL, Body depth 25.8-28.4 % of TL, Inter-orbital width 6.1-7.1 % of SL, Upper jaw 44-45.6 % of HL, Lower jaw 46-49 % of HL, Pectoral fin length 22-24% of SL, Pelvic fin 14.8-19.23 % of SL, Anal fin

17.2 -19.5 % of SL, Caudal peduncle depth 30 % of body depth. The fish mainly caught and in winter seasons along with the coral associated fishes by hook and line is used for local consumption and its price varies from ₹ 30-50/ kg in the local market.

Table 1. Morphometric and meristics of *S. lactomaculata*

Parameters	Measurement range (cm)
Total length	15.5-21.1
Standard length	13.5-18.2
Head length	4.5-7.5
Snout length	1.2-2.3
Body depth	4-6
Eye diameter	0.7-0.9
Inter-orbital width	0.9-1.3
Pre orbital- length	1.2-2.3
Post orbital length	1.5-1.8
Upper jaw length	2.0-3.5
Lower jaw length	2.1-3.7

Pectoral fin length	3-4.5
Pectoral base length	2-2.8
Pelvic fin length	2-3.5
Pelvic fin base length	1-2
Pelvic fin spine length	1.5-2
Length of longest spine (4 <sup>th</sup> )	
on dorsal fin	1.5-1.7
Anal fin length	2.3-3.5
Anal fin base length	1.4-2.1
Length of longest spine	
on anal fin	2.3-2.9
Caudal fin length	2.3-3
Caudal peduncle depth	1.2-1.8
Dorsal fin spine and rays	12+9
Pectoral fin spine and rays	0+17-19
Pelvic fin spine and rays	1+5
Anal fin spine and rays	3+5
Caudal fin rays	13
Vertical scale rows	58-61
Lateral line scales	42-51