

First report on the occurrence of the silky shark, *Carcharhinus falciformis* (Müller & Henle, 1839) in commercial landings along the east coast of India

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Silky sharks *Carcharhinus falciformis* (Müller & Henle, 1839) are large oceanic sharks, known to be circumtropical in distribution, occurring mostly in the subtropics between 40°N and 40°S. They are highly migratory, known to inhabit continental and insular shelves and slopes, deep water reefs, and the open sea. They are also occasionally sighted in inshore waters. They are solitary in nature and are often found near schools of tuna, increasing the chances of forming a bycatch of tuna fisheries. These sharks have been reported in the fishery only along the southwest coast of India, and were recorded in small numbers at Cochin during 2000-2002. In 2010 however, this species formed about 16.3% of the shark landings at Cochin. In spite of this, these sharks have not formed a fishery along the east coast.

A young male *C. falciformis*, was recorded for the first time at Kasimedu Fisheries Harbour (Chennai) on 02.08.2012. This shark was caught by hook and line deployed for tuna fishing in the Bay of



Fig. 1. Young female silky shark caught in hook & line from the Bay of Bengal

Bengal, north of Chennai at 200 m depth. Three more young sharks - two females and one male, were collected this year, on 11.07.2013, 18.07.2013 and 17.08.2013. The sharks were in the size range of 66-83 cm total length and 1.57-2.5 kg total weight.

On 20th Augsut, 2013, 10 young *C. falciformis* were landed at Visakhapatnam Harbour. The specimens ranged 75-97.2 cm in total length and 1.9-5 kg in total weight. The sharks were caught by motorized hook and line gear operated off the coast of Visakhapatnam. This is the first report of the species being landed along the east coast of India.