

Heavy landings of *Elops machnata* from drift gill net at Tharuvaikulam landing centre, Tuticorin

Ranjith, L., Kanthan, K. P. and Madan, M. S.
Tuticorin Research Centre of CMFRI, Tuticorin

On 18th September 2013, heavy landing of the Indo-Pacific tarpon or tenpounder, *Elops machnata* (Forsskal, 1775) was observed in multiday drift gill net at Tharuvaikulam landing centre, Tuticorin. This was locally called as “Kulanchan” or “Valaya kulanchan”. It is also called as Poomeen or Mooran kendai or Manna in different parts of Tamil Nadu. These fishes were actually caught approximately 65 Nm southeast of Tharuvaikulam landing centre, Tuticorin which is 23 Nm from Kannyakumari coast at a depth ranged from 40-60 m. The mechanised wooden boat of 16 m OAL and 220 HP was used for drift gill net operation. The drift gill net of mesh size 125 mm (length 2500 meter and 14 metre depth) was used. The fishing trip started in the morning at

11.00 hrs and reached the fishing ground at 19.00 hrs. After 4 days of fishing they returned back in the morning 06.00 hrs. Around 786 kg (118 no's) of *E. machnata* was landed by single unit in 4 hauls (where the operation time is mostly in the night) on that four days of fishing trip. This is the first instance of such huge landing of the *E. machnata* at Tharuvaikulam, Tuticorin.

E. machnata is a eurythermic tropical species found widely in subtropical and warm temperate regions. This is also a euryhaline species having a wide salinity tolerance i.e., 0 to 90 ppt and mostly found in turbid waters (Whitfield, 2005; Whitfield *et al.* 2006). Juveniles are common in warm, turbid

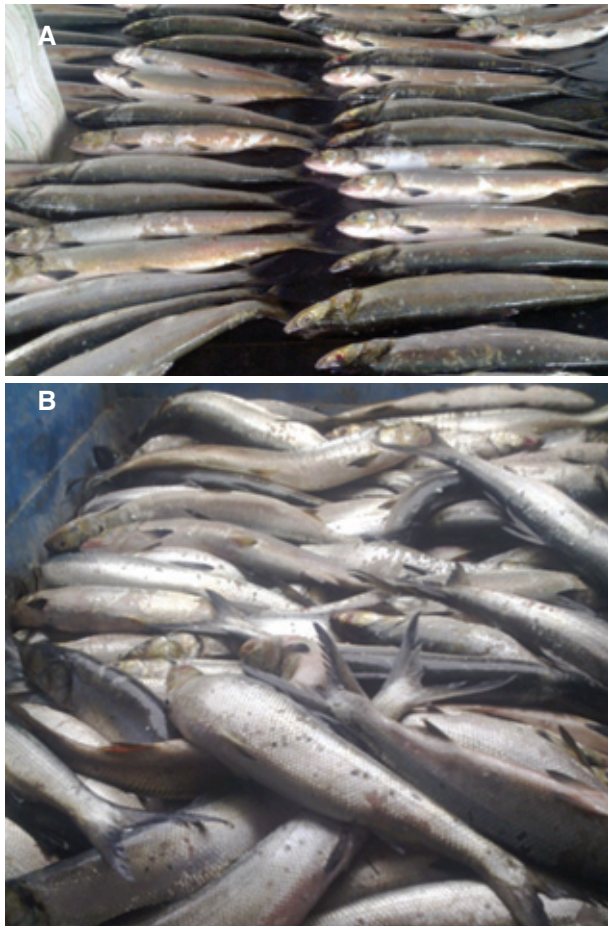


Fig. A, B. *Elops machnata* landed by drift gillnet at Tharuvaikulam, Tuticorin

estuaries on which they are dependent as nursery areas (Mann and Radebe, 1999) whereas adults are probably spawn at sea, but the transparent leptocephalus larvae migrate to inshore areas and often found in brackish water (Kottelat *et al.*, 1993). The unusual landing is a fish in the sea is related to certain physical and chemical parameters of the water. It was presumed by the fishermen that cold wind coupled with turbid water favours the fish species to congregate in a particular location may be for breeding where the fishes are caught but during the other periods these fishes are generally caught as single.

In addition to *E. machnata* other species landed were *Thunnus albacares* (120 kg), *Euthynnus affinis* (60 kg), *Katsuwonus pelamis* (20 kg), Carangids (4 kg) and Scomberoides (6 kg). The observed length classes are ranging from 930 to 1050 mm weighing 4 to 7 kg. These fishes were sold at a price ranging from 70 per kg. These fishes are edible, but not tasty and full of bones so it was not locally consumed mainly used as dry fish transported to dry fish market at Melayapalayam, Tirunelveli. The total revenue earned from sale on the single unit on the day was ₹ 63,190.