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On the occurrence and fishery of fishes of the family Gempylidae along the Tuticorin Coast in Gulf of Mannar

Fishes belonging to the family Gempylidae have formed part of regular fish landings by trawls and large meshed gillnet (Paruvalai) since deep sea fishing started off Tuticorin in Gulf of Mannar. Occurrence of six species of Gempylids are reported from the bathypelagic tropical seas. They are *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*, *Ruvettus pretiosus* cocco, *Gempylus serpens*, *Neoepinnula orientalis* and Von Bonde *Thysitoides marlei* and *Thysites atun*. Of these *L.flavobrunneum*, *R.pretiossus* and *N. orientalis* formed a regular fishery and contributed moderately to the fish landings.

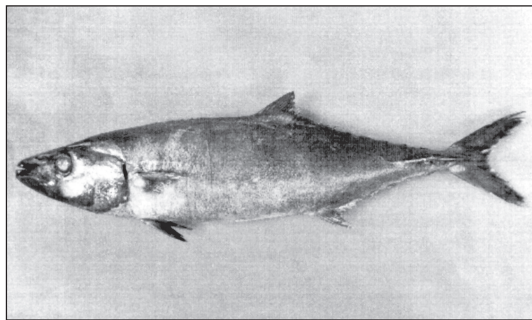


Fig. 1. *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*

About 15.4 t of gempylids were landed by large meshed gillnets (8-16 cm) during 2004-2006 (Table 1) of which nearly 98.2% was contributed by *L. flavobrunneum* (Fig. 1) and the rest (1.8%) by *R. pretiosus*. Since the fisher folks as well as fish traders were not familiar with these species they were reluctant to purchase these fishes in the open bidding. Almost all the members of this family yield high amount of oil which in turn changed new market potentials. The size of the fish ranged between 45 and 105 cm and fetched a reasonable price of Rs. 30-50/kg. Peak season of this fishery coincides with the peak season of tuna fishery i.e. June-September. In addition to this, stray individuals of *T. marlei* were also encountered in the paruvalai landings.

About 236.5 t of *Neoepinnula orientalis* were caught by trawlers during 2004-2006. (Table 2) On an average 79 t were caught by 26406 trawlers annually. Their size ranged from 16-30 cm. During the initial period this

Table 1: Month-wise estimated landings of *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum* and *Ruvettus pretiosus* in Kg by larger mesh gillnets at Tuticorin during 2004-2006.

Year	Jan	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2004	506	427	1121	72	---	66	---	*126	2318
2005	44	---	545	5562	2002	30	---	---	8183
2006	---	---	---	4316	373	124	*122	---	4935
Total	550	427	1666	9950	2375	220	*122	*126	15436

**Ruvettus pretiosus*

Table 2: Month-wise estimated landings of *Neopinnula orientalis* in Kg by trawlers at Tuticorin during 2004-2006.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Nov	Dec	Total
2004	---	47238	5460	1584	---	54372
2005	13894	3584	7492	---	---	24970
2006	---	4080	---	10759	142296	157135
Total	13894	54992	12952	12343	142296	236477

fish was also not preferred for human consumption. Subsequently it has been recognized as one of the delicious fish variety and thus it fetched better price in the market. It was sold for Rs: 20-40 /kg. Locally it is

known as 'seela kutti' (young ones of seerfish).

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