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ON A BRAMBLE SHARK WITH 52 EMBRYOS*

On 14 - 10 - 1989, two female specimens of the bramble shark, *Echinorhinus brucus* (Bonaterre, 1788), measuring 262 and 220 cm total length and weighing respectively 120 and 80 kg were caught off Thoothoor, a fishing village of Kanyakumari district, by hooks and line at about 100 m depth. As the larger specimen (Fig. 1) was beached from the boat, 4 well-developed live embryos oozed out of it. On examination by cutting open its uteri, 48 more well-developed live embryos could be seen (Fig. 2). It is not known whether more embryos got out of the shark while towing it to the beach from the boat anchored 100 m away in the sea. The total length of the embryos ranged from 36 to 54 cm.

The bramble shark is known to be a deep water species, also occurring in shallow water and along continental slopes at depths from 18 to 900 m. It is a ovoviviparous shark with 15 to 24 young

ones per litter and may breed in April in Indian waters.

The present specimen, caught in October, had at least 52 well-developed embryos. Silas and Selvaraj (*J. mar. biol. Ass. India*, 14 (1) : 395 - 401, 1972) described an embryo of this species collected in April and another obtained in July containing a well-developed embryo.

The two specimens were auctioned for Rs. 130/-. Since the fins and flesh of this shark are not esteemed here, after removing the liver for extracting oil, the carcasses were abandoned.

The liver of this shark contains a high percentage of oil (78.07%) according to Silas and Selvaraj (1972), but its oil is inferior in quality and used for painting country canoes to avoid settlement of borers. South Africans view that its oil has high medicinal value (Smith, *The Sea Fishes of Southern Africa*, 4th Ed. : 1 - 580, 1961).

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