

A CASE OF COMPLETE ALBINISM IN MARINE CAT FISH  
*ARIUS CAELATUS* (VALENCIENNES)

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Complete albinism in the marine cat fish, *Arius caelatus* (Val.) is reported for the first time.

Even though incomplete albinism like ambicolouration (Jones and Menon 1950), xanthochromism (Nroman 1947) and melanism (Hora 1941) is less frequent, complete albinism is comparatively rare (Gupta and Bhowmik 1958, Rajapandian and Sundaram 1957, Baragi et al 1976).

A specimen of the marine cat fish, *Arius caelatus* (Valenciennes) exhibiting complete albinism was noticed on 6-7-78 in a single haul of the Exploratory Fisheries vessel, M. T. *Meena Sangrahalak*, which operated at a depth of 29-42 m. in the area 18-72, sub area 6D (Lat. 18°50'N, to 19°00'N, Long. 72° 30'E to 72° 40'E). Of the total catch of 95 kg, the cat fishes constituted 10.6%.

The present report is the first instance of complete albinism in *Arius caelatus*. Hence detailed morphometric measurements were taken and compared with those of a normal individual of the same size to see if any variations existed due to albinism. But for the absence of pigmentation and some variations in length and colour of the barbels, the albino agrees in general morphological and meristic counts typical of the species. The tips of the barbels were reddish in colour. The maxillary and mandibular barbels were shorter and the internal mandibular barbels were longer in the albino than the normal specimen.

The albino in the present case was found with ovaries in spent condition indicating thereby that it has already spawned, eventhough to survive and attain sexual maturity in albinos is rare and far between (Jones and Pantulu 1952).

The term 'Albinism' is generally used to connote absence of pigmentation, which is only nature's freak (Jones and Pantulu 1952) and not necessarily a hereditary trait (Martin 1963), however, exact cause to this, such as mutation or pathological condition cannot be given (Hora 1926).

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