

ON THE NATURAL DISTRIBUTION AND TAXONOMY OF *GERRES*
MACRACANTHUS BLEEKER (PISCES : GERREIDAE)

During a recent survey the Long-rayed mojarra, *Gerres macracanthus* Bleeker, belonging to the family Gerreidae, was surprisingly observed to be a fairly common component along with *G. filamentosus* Cuvier, in the commercial catches at Ratnagiri (Maharashtra). Both are locally called 'charbat'. While the latter species is widely distributed in the Indo-west Pacific, the former species has hitherto been recorded only from the Palk Bay, the East Indies, New Guinea and the Philippines. New information about *G. macracanthus* is desirable since its taxonomic status is most uncertain. In the present communication the natural distribution of the species is extended to the Arabian Sea and its nomenclature discussed. Its synonymy and characters are :

***Gerres (Pertica) macracanthus* Bleeker**

? *Gerres punctatus* Cuvier, 1830, *Hist. nat. Poiss.*, 6 : 480 (type-locality : Pondicherry).

Gerres macracanthus Bleeker, 1854, *Nat. Tijdschr. Ned.-Indie*, 6 : 195 (type-locality : Batavia, Java); Venkataraman and Badrudeen, 1977, *Indian J. Fish.*, 22 : 290, fig. 1.

Gerres filamentosus Menon (*nec* Cuvier), 1966, *Rec. Indian Mus.*, 59 (4) : 392 (Pondicherry).

Material : 6 ex., 87-120 mm in standard length, Ratnagiri (Maharashtra), 10 May 1981, coll. P. K. Talwar & P. Mukherjee; Zoological Survey of India regd. no. F.7732/2.

Description : Dorsal rays IX 10; anal III 7; pectoral i 15; pelvic I 5; branched caudal fin rays 8+7; scales in lateral line 46

to 48; scales between dorsal-fin origin and lateral line 5, from lateral line to anal-fin origin 10-11; gill-rakers 6+8 on first branchial arch.

Body deep and moderately compressed, its depth 37.7-43.0% of standard length. Length of head 28.5-33.3, length of pectoral fin 30.0-35.8, length of second dorsal spine 40.8-51.1; all in % of standard length. Eye-diameter 34.2-39.2, snout length 31.6-37.2, interorbital width 29.2-35.8; all in % of head length. Predorsal distance distinctly more than the depth of body.

Mouth small, strongly protrusible; mandibular profile concave. Teeth in villiform bands in both jaws; no teeth on vomer, palatines, or tongue.

Second dorsal spine flattened, greatly elongated into a filament, longer than the head. Pectoral fins long, extending to or beyond anal-fin origin.

Scales conspicuous, completely covering head and body.

Colour : in life, silvery with glittering scales but dark grey when viewed from above, with 8 to 10 dusky vertical bars on back and sides of body. Dorsal fin slightly dusky, with a row of dark spots in the middle of the membranous portion; other fins yellowish.

Taxonomy : Barnard (1927) relegated *Gerres macracanthus* Bleeker, 1854, along with *G. filamentosus* Cuvier, 1830, to the

synonymy of *G. punctatus* Cuvier, 1830. Fowler (1928) was of the opinion that *G. macracanthus* was based on immature examples of *G. filamentosus*. Weber & de Beaufort (1931), however, considered *G. macracanthus* distinct from *G. punctatus*, but *G. filamentosus* as a junior synonym of the latter species based on Sauvage's (1891) examination of the types of the latter two species. Fowler (1933) and recently Fischer & Whitehead (1976), considered both *G. punctatus* and *G. macracanthus* conspecific with *G. filamentosus*, and showed that the latter species was first described by Cuvier in 1829 and not 1830 as earlier contended. Munro (1967) distinguished *G. macracanthus* Bleeker from *G. filamentosus* Cuvier, 1829, and this was followed by Venkataraman & Badrudeen (1977) on the basis of new material from the Palk Bay. While it is clear that two distinct deep-bodied species of *Gerres* with a greatly elongated second dorsal spine, are undoubtedly involved, the imperfectly described *Gerres punctatus* Cuvier from Pondicherry is most likely a senior synonym of *G. macracanthus* Bleeker from Batavia (Java). The junior author's collecting in the same general region disclosed the latter species and it seems probable that all specimens from India formerly identified as *G. macracanthus* in reality represent *G. punctatus* Cuvier.

Species of the genus *Gerres* are all very much alike in general appearance. *G. filamentosus* and *G. macracanthus* are, however, separated from all other species of Gerreidae by the greatly elongated second dorsal spine. Since this character is shared by no

other species, the allocation of these two species to a separate subgeneric group is warranted. For this group the generic name *Pertica* Fowler, 1904, is fortunately available.

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