

ON AN ABNORMAL CATFISH *MYSTUS VITTATUS* (BLOCH, 1794)  
(PISCES : BAGRIDAE) WITH A FORKED MAXILLARY BARBEL

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ABSTRACT

An abnormal specimen of *Mystus vittatus* (Bloch) with a forked left barbel was reported for the first time.

During our investigations on the fishes of Hussain Sagar lake, a polluted lake in Hyderabad, one interesting female specimen of catfish *Mystus vittatus* (Bloch) with a forked left maxillary barbel was recorded on 24th August, 1982. (Pl. XV). The forking of the barbel has its origin at 3.4 cm., from the base of the barbel. Both the dorsal and ventral forked arms are of equal length, measuring 3.4 cms., in length from the base of the fork to the tip. The right unforked maxillary barbel is 7.4 cms., in length from the base to the tip. Except for this abnormality of the left maxillary barbel, all the other characters are agreeing with the description of the species *Mystus vittatus* (Bloch).

The following are the meristic and morphometric characters of the abnormal specimen :

$P=I/7=8$  ;  $V=6$  ;  $D=II/7=9$  ;  $A=II/8$  ;  
 $C=17$ .

*Total length* : 11.90 cms ; *Standard length* =9.50 cms ; *Head length*=2.50 cms ; *Body depth*=2.15 cms ; *Prepectoral distance* 2.0p cms ; *Preventral distance* : 4.65 cms ; Pre-

*Dorsal distance*=3.75 cms ; *Pre-Anal distance* =6.65 cms ; *Pectoral fin length*=1.85 cms ; *Ventral fin length*=1.35 cms ; *Dorsal fin base*=1.50 cms ; *Anal fin base*=1.05 cms ; *Eye diameter*=0.45 cms ; *snout length*=0.75 cms ; *Depth of peduncle*=1.05 cms ; *Pre-Adipose fin distance*=6.05 cms ; *Adipose fin base*=2.10 cms.

Earlier forked barbels were recorded in *Callichrous macrophthalmus* (Blyth) (Tandon & Sharma, 1971) ; in *Clarias batrachus* (Linnaeus) (Ovais, 1974, Thakur & Singh Kohli, 1976) ; in *Heteropneustes fossilis* (Bloch) (Datta & Ghosh, 1975) ; in *Ompok bimaculatus* (Bloch) (Raghunathan, 1976), and in *Tachysurus maculatus* (Thunberg) (Edwin Chandrasekharan, 1979). However, this is the first record of forked maxillary barbel in *Mystus vittatus* (Bloch).

Jayaram (1978) stated that the catfish barbels are intended for tactile, gustatory, locomotory, aggressive and sexual functions. In the present case during early stages of development, in the course of one of the above activities, the barbel might have been

injured or split, resulting in the growth of forked maxillary barbel in this abnormal specimen.

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