



Short Communication

FIRST REPORT OF STARGAZER *ICHTHYSOPUS LEBECK* (BLOCH AND SCHNEIDER, 1801) FROM DIGHA COAST, INDIA.

INTRODUCTON

The commonly known Stargazers of the family Uranoscopidae is represented by four species in Indian water limited to three genera (Taiwar, 1991) and 50 species in world from 8 genera, 8 species known in genus *Ichthyoscopus* (Froese & Pauly, 2011). Digha being one of the most renowned fish landing center of eastern India has been in prime focus for the Ichthyologic faunal diversity of the region. Various studies have been carried out to study the fish faunal diversity of this region (Manna and Goswami, 1985; Goswami, 1992; Chatterjee *et al.* 2000), and that have documented only one species of the family Uranoscopidae, so far from the area. During the present study two examples stargazers were collected which after close observation identified as *Jchthyoscopus lebeck* (Bloch and Schneider, 1801). It is the first report of the species from coastal waters of Digha. The present paper deals with the description of the species in detail.

SYSTEMATIC POSITION

Class PISCES

Sub-Class TELEOSTEI

Order PERCIFORMES

Family URANOSCOPIDAE Richardson.

1801. *Uranoscopus lebeck*, Bloch & Schneider, *Syst. Ichthyol.* 47 (Tranquebar, Tamil Nadu, India)
1829. *Uranoscopus inermis*, Cuvier, in Cuvier and Valenciennes, *Hist. Nat. Poiss.*, 3 : 310, pi. 65. (Coromandel, Malabar, Pondichery, India)
1876. *Ichthyoscopus inermis*, Day, *Fish.India*: 261, pi. 55.
2001. *Ichthyoscopus lebeck*, Kishimoto, in Carpenter and Niem, *The living marine resources of Western Central Pacific*: 3526.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Regd. No. F612, lex, SL 362 mm, Locality: Kirtiniyaa (Balasore), Odisha, Date of collection: 04.09.2009. & Regd. No. F768, lex, SL 254 mm, Locality: Mohana, Digha, Date of collection. 17.12.2010.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARATERS

Body short and round form. Head massive, nearly cup shaped, flattened dorsally, rounded anteriorly, dorsal and lateral surfaces of head almost entirely encased in sculptured by bony structures. Head length 2.8-2.83 times in standard length; body depth 2.3-2.9 times in standard length; eye diameter 17.4-18.3 times in head length. Eyes small directed dorsally, placed on head. Head slightly depressed on the frontal and the occipital regions. Mouth large, protactile almost vertical, jaws pre-vomer palatine toothed and lips with fimbriate ridges. Upper margin of nasal valves fringed. Dorsal fin single with two spines and 18 soft rays, pectoral fin fleshy knife shaped, having 19 soft rays and the upper rays are longer than the middle, pelvic fin with 6 soft rays, anal fin long with 17 soft rays and caudal fin truncate with 12 soft rays. The cleithrum is entirely concealed with fleshy appendages near the pectoral fin. A respiratory groove present between upper part of the cleithrum and pectoral fin which connects the gill opening. A dermal fold present along midventral margin of belly. Lateral line naked or covered with some scales and it running close to soft dorsal fin base. Body canary yellow, with buffer brown markings along sides enclosing pure white round spots. White spots are also extended to the pectoral and dorsal fins (Fig. 1). Body scales arranged in regular oblique rows.



Fig. 1: Dorsal and anterior view of *Ichthyoscopus lebeck*, Indian Stargazer

HABIT AND DISTRIBUTION

Members of this family are circumtropical in distribution and occur in warm and temperate

waters from estuaries to the deep sea. They are nocturnal and during the day bury their body into sand or mud, with only the eyes and mouth cleft protruding from the substrate. Therefore, they are rarely taken by beach seines during daytime but are often fished by gill nets at night. They are distributed in Indo-West Pacific: mainly from the southern coasts of India; a single record from Singapore (Kishimoto, 2001). From Indian waters, the species is reported from Odisha (Barman *et al.*, 2007) and Tamil Nadu (Barman *et al.*, 2011)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors are thankful to Dr. K. Venkataraman, Director, Zoological Survey of India for providing necessary facilities for the work.

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PRASANNA YENNAWAR, PRASAD CHANDRA TUDU AND ANIL MOHAPATRA
Marine Aquarium & Regional Center, Zoological Survey of India, Foreshore Road,
Digha-721428, West Bengal.

*corresponding author: yprasanna@rocketmail.com