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### **Short Communication**

## **A NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *SICAMUGIL CASCASIA* (PISCES : MUGILIDAE) IN THE FRESHWATER ZONE OF THE HOOGHLY ESTUARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During a recent survey in the stretch between Nababgunj and Monirampore (Barrackpore) in the freshwater zone of the Hooghly estuary thirteen (13) specimens of *Sicamugil cascasia* (Plate-1a), a small mullet, could be collected from set barriers operated near Monirampore during the months of August, 2005, June, 2006 and August, 2006. Day (1889), stated that the species is distributed in the upper reaches of Ganga and Jamuna, as low down as Patna. Jhingran and Talwar (1991) also stated that the species is purely a freshwater one and the lowest point on the Ganga river system where they were recorded was Patna. The present author, however, could record the species from about 20 km above Barauni (Bihar) down to Manikchwak in the district of Malda, West Bengal during an extensive investigation on the environment and fishery of the river Ganga instituted by the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute between 1994-'96. The species, however, was not recorded earlier from the Nababgunj-Barrackpore (Monirampore) freshwater stretch of the Hooghly estuary.

*Keywords* : Mullet, *Sicamugil cascasia*, Freshwater zone, Hooghly estuary.

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

*Place of collection* : Near Monirampore (Barrackpore); *Date of collection* : 31.viii.2005, 26.vi.2006 and 19.viii.2006; *Gear* : Set barrier; Collected by Shri A.K. Jana, Technical Assistant.

*Colour in fresh condition* : Slightly greenish yellow on the back and upper sides of the body. Silvery white on the lower sides and belly. Scattered black dots on the body. A large yellow blotch at the caudal base. Yellow dot at the base of the pectoral (Plate-Ia).

*Description of the specimens* : *The largest specimen* : TL-46 mm; SL-38 mm; weight in fresh condition : 1.137 g; *The smallest specimen* : TL-30 mm; SL-24 mm; weight in fresh condition : 0.285 g.

Head a little wide, dorsally flattened; Length of head (Mean) 4.45 (4.10-4.88) in Total length; adipose eye-lid absent; pre-orbital with serrated lower margin, provided with 3 minute denticles posteriorly. Opercle with a spine. The proportion of the space between 1st and 2nd dorsal : total length = 1 : 4.57 (Mean value), 1st dorsal inserted almost at the middle, nearer to the tip of the snout and provided with 4 spinous rays of which 2nd one is the largest. Anal fin origin opposite to 2nd dorsal origin. Anal fin with three spinous and 8-9 soft rays. Caudal fin lunate. Scales ctenoid (Plate-Ib); Lateral line absent.

### DISCUSSION

Though Jayaram (1981) and Jhingran and Talwar (1991) opined that the species is a freshwater one and found only in the upper reaches of the river Ganga, Sen (1992) stated that the species was found in the Sundarbans complex of estuarine water. This is, however, not substantiated by Talwar, *et al.* (1992) who while giving an account of estuarine and marine fishes of West Bengal did not enlist *Sicamugil cascasia*. David (1954) did not mention about the presence of the species in the Nababgunj-Barrackpore stretch of the Hooghly estuary. Menon, *et al.* (1972) also did not make any mention about the species in the upper reaches of Hooghly. Recent survey conducted by CIFRI, Barrackpore during 1995-'96 did not reveal its presence in the Hooghly estuary. The present author could not record the species in any of the stretches from down stream of freshwater to high saline zone save and except the ones reported in the present communication. The water salinities in the Barrackpore-Nababgunj stretch, when these small mullets were collected, were 0.04, 0.06 and 0.05‰ respectively, thus demonstrating a freshwater condition.

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