FISHES OF THE GENUS *ILISHA* RICHARDSON, 1846 FROM VISAKHAPATNAM

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Abstract

Twelve species of genus *Ilisha* Richardson, 1846 are recognised to date. The genus and constituent species are badly in need of revision. Five of the twelve species have so far not been recorded from India.

Of the seven species recorded from India, the type locality of two species *Ilisha indica* (Swainson) and *I. megaloptera* (Swain.), is Visakhapatnam and of a third species *I. filigera* (Val.) is Coromandel Coast. Descriptions of these three species based on new material from Visakhapatnam are given, because earlier descriptions are inadequate or partially incorrect.

The salient features of the posterior frontal fontanelles and the vertebral column are given.

Introduction

The genus *Ilisha* is badly in need of revision as has been pointed out by Whitehead (1965). Species of this genus are widely distributed in Indian waters and although never abundant, they occur in fair numbers at some places, e.g., Kakinada on east coast. Fowler (1941) included thirteen species in genus *Ilisha*, seven of which were earlier described by Day (1878) in genus *Pellona*; of these thirteen species, Whitehead *et al.* (1966) have recently shown *I. amblyuroptera* (Blkr.), 1852 to be the same as *I. pristigasteroides* (Bleeker), 1852. Thus of the twelve species recognised to date, five species have not been so far reported from India; one of these latter, *Pellona (= Ilisha) sladeni* included by Day (1878) in his *Fishes of India* is from river Irrawady at Mandalay, Burma, which at that time formed part of British India; the type localities of the other four species are in Indo-Malayan Archipelago. Considering the similarity in the fish fauna of the latter region and the coasts of

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India, it should not be surprising if one or more of the five species not so far recorded from India, do occur in Indian waters.

Of the seven species of *Ilisha* from India, three species occur at Visakhapatnam. The type locality of two of them: *Ilisha indica* (Swainson), 1938 (based on *Ditchoee* Russell, 1803) and *Ilisha megaloptera* (Swainson), 1839 (based on *Jangarloo* Russell, 1803) is Vizagapatam (= Visakhapatnam). The type locality of the third species *Ilisha filigera* (Val.), 1847 is given as Coromandel† and Bombay (Fowler, 1941). It is interesting to note that these clupeids occur more in boat seines operated from non-mechanised cattamarams working in pairs and in trawl catches, albeit in small number, rather than in drift nets and shore seines which are operated mainly for clupeoids. Other clupeoids which are pelagic, do appear in boat seine and trawl catches but not so regularly, and in such small numbers that their occurrence could be attributed to chance capture as the net is hauled up. The regularity with which *Ilisha* species occur in boat seine and trawl catches suggests that they frequent relatively deeper waters within reach of the trawl mouth. The area traversed by trawlers here does not normally extend beyond a depth of about 70 m.

The classification adopted here is from Whitehead (1965). For synonymy of species described here, *vide* Fowler (1941) and Whitehead (1965).

**Material and Methods**

Samples of *Ilisha* spp. were collected from trawl catches and bottom-set gill nets operated by the Central Offshore Fishing Station, Visakhapatnam, and from boat seines operated from non-mechanised cattamarams operated by local fishermen; they occur rarely in the relatively small-mesh drift nets and hardly ever in shore seines.

Among body measurements and meristic data taken mention may be made of the following:

1. **Standard length.**—From snout tip to base of middle caudal rays.
2. **Head length.**—Snout tip to posteriormost limit of operculum.
3. **Snout.**—Snout tip to middle of anterior border of eye.

† Visakhapatnam is in the northern half of Coromandel Coast, a term used in 18th and 19th centuries for the northern part of the east coast of Madras Presidency, but its limits were not clearly defined. Apart from Visakhapatnam, the coastal fishing towns of Cocanada (= Kakinada) and Masulipatam (= Machilipatnam) which are all now in Andhra State were included in it.