

**A RECORD OF THE SAIL FISH, *ISTIOPHORUS PLATYPTERUS* (SHAW & NODDER)
(PISCES : ISTIOPHORIDAE) FROM DIGHA COAST, WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

T. K. CHATTERJEE, S. TALUKDAR and RAMKRISHNA

*Marine Aquarium & Research Centre
Zoological Survey of India
Digha, West Bengal*

The marine ichthyofauna of Digha coast of West Bengal has been described by Manna & Goswami (1985) and Goswami (1992). In their account, there is no mention of the Pacific sail fish, *Istiophorus platypterus* (Shaw & Nodder), which is reportedly known from tropical waters of Indian Ocean (Talwar & Kacker, 1984 : 827). Talwar (1994) also failed to report this species from West Bengal coast. Recently, in the course of our field investigation at Digha, we found a specimen of *I. platypterus*, 2.95 m. in total length, caught by the fishermen with the help of the fishing launch fitted with longline arrangement from Bay of Bengal, about 25 km off Digha coast on 24.12.93. From the fishermen of Digha, it was learnt that no sail fish was earlier caught from this coast.

Along with the above specimen, three other robust fishes viz., *Pristis microdon* Latham, 4.35 m. in total length; *Stegostoma fasciatum* (Hermann), 3.6 m.; *Rhinobatus granulatus* (Cuvier), 2.08 m. in total length were caught. Capture of such large fishes at a time and sail fish in particular generated curiosity among the residents of Digha, and an exhibition for the same was arranged by Digha Fishermen and Fish Traders Association. Since, the record of the sail fish, *I. platypterus* from Digha Coast is significant, a brief description of the specimen is given below :

***Istiophorus platypterus* (Shaw & Nodder)**

1791 *Xiphias platypterus* Shaw & Nodder, *Natural Misc.*, 10 : 28, pl 8.

Diagnosis : Body elongate, laterally compressed. Snout long, upper jaw prolonged into a spear. Fine teeth in jaws and palatines. Two dorsal fins, first dorsal fins extremely high, sail like, with 45 rays, second dorsal fin small with 6 rays. Two anal fins with 13 and 16 rays respectively. Pectoral fin falcate, with 19 rays. Pelvic fin with one spine and 2 rays, very long reaching the anus. Caudal fin deeply forked. Fine scales embedded in skin.

Colour : Dark blue dorsally, gradually becoming silvery below, first dorsal fin blackish blue with black spots, other fins blackish brown, about 20 blackish horizontal bars on body.

Material examined : One ex., 2.95 m. in total length, a colour transparency has been prepared by one the authors (S. T.) which has been deposited at Marine Aquarium & Research Centre under Regd. No. MARC 18.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to the Director, Zoological Survey of India, for encouragement and to Prof. R. L. Brahmachary, Emeritus Scientist, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta for kindly going through the manuscript. Our sincere thanks are due to Shri Dinabandhu De, Secretary, Digha Fishermen and Fish Traders Association for providing us the facility to examine the specimen.

REFERENCES

- Goswami, B. C. B. 1992. Marine Fauna of Digha Coast of West Bengal, India. *J. mar. biol. Assc. India*, **34** (1-2) : 115 - 137.
- Manna , B, and Goswami, B. C. B. 1985. A Check list of Marine and esturine fishes of Digha Coast, West Bengal, India. *Mahasagar*, **18** (4) : 498 - 499.
- Talwar, P. K. and Kacker, R. K. 1984. *Commercial Sea fishes of India*. Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.
- Talwar, P. K., Mukherjee, P., Saha, D., Paul, S. N., and Kar, S. 1994. Marine and esturine fishes : In *Fauna of West Bengal*, part - 2 : 243 - 342 (1992/1994), Zool. Surv. India.
-