

**NEMIPTERUS DELAGOAE SMITH (NEMIPTERIDAE: PISCES)
A NEW RECORD FROM THE INDIAN SEAS**

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ABSTRACT

The occurrence of *Nemipterus delagoae* Smith is reported here for the first time from the Indian seas based on one specimen 231 mm total length, collected from 40-m depth at 9°35'N 76°05'E along the southwest coast of India. The species is described and illustrated.

Threadfin breams, of the genus *Nemipterus* Swainson, constitute an important group of commercial fishes in India. Of the twenty species of this genus recorded from the Indo-Australian Archipelago (Weber and de Beaufort 1936) only five are reported from the Indian seas by Day (1878) under genus *Synagris* (Klein) Gunther, as *S. striatus* (= *Nemipterus striatus*), *S. tolu* (= *N. tolu*), *S. bleekeri*, *S. notatus* (= *N. hexodon*) and *S. japonicus* (= *N. japonicus*). During the exploratory trawling surveys off the southwest coast of India carried out by M.V. Meena Udpadak, the authors came across a single specimen of *Nemipterus delagoae* Smith the occurrence of which has not hitherto been reported from the Indian seas.

The known distribution of this species is along the east coast of South Africa from Delagoa Bay to Beira. The present collection from the southwest coast of India is of particular interest as it extends its known distribution further to the Central Indian Ocean. This being a new distributional record from the Indian seas, a description of the specimen with an illustration is given below.

NEMIPTERUS DELAGOA SMITH

Nemipterus delagoae Smith, 1961. *Fishes of Southern Africa*, p. 257, pl. 21, fig. 672 (Type locality: Delagoa Bay).

Material: One male, 231-mm total length (weight 160 gm) from 9°35'N 76°05'E trawled out from a depth of 40 m during an exploratory fishing cruise of the Government of India Deep Sea Fishing Vessel Meena Udpadak on 18-12-1973.

Description: D X, 9; A III, 7; P 16; V I, 5; C 20; TL, 49; L.tr. 4/9. Head 4.1; depth of body at dorsal origin 4.3; snout to origin of spinous dorsal 3.6 in total length. Snout 2.7; eye 3.8; maxillary 2.7; interorbital 3.8; ventral 0.8; pectoral 1.2 in head length. Length of fourth dorsal spine 3.0; length of first dorsal ray 2.4; length of second anal spine 4.1; least depth of caudal peduncle 3.0 in head length. Scales 49 along lateral line up to caudal base; 4 scales above lateral line and 9 below.

Body elongate with fairly large scales which are deciduous. Mouth moderate, with rows of small conical teeth, a few small canines in front; palate edentulous; preopercle flange naked; three rows of scales on the cheek; lower limb of the outer gillarch has 7 knobular gill rakers while upper limb has 5; pectoral short; outer ray of pelvic fin elongated and almost reaching first anal ray; caudal deeply forked.

Colour: The colouration is characteristic. In fresh condition the upper half of the body is pink to rose coloured becoming silvery at sides and beneath. Four yellow longitudinal bands are present below the lateral line, but above the upper part of the pectoral. Snout pinkish with a golden patch below. Auxiliary scales of pelvic yellowish. Anal fin with four broader greenish-yellow bands and the fin membrane is light blue, tinged with yellow. On preservation in formalin the anal fin colouration and the yellow longitudinal bands in body faded gradually with time. Eggleston (1972) drew attention to the importance of the colour pattern in identifying the threadfin breams, indicating that even juvenile fish of 5 cm long bear the characteristic colour pattern of the respective species.

Distribution: Delagoa Bay to Beira along the East coast of South Africa. Now recorded from a depth of 40 m along the west coast of India.

The present specimen agrees well with the description of *N. delagoae* Smith. The important characters of *N. delagoae* distinguishing it from the other known species of the Indian waters are worth mentioning here. Of the five species recorded from Indian waters, four, viz. *N. striatus*, *N. tolu*, *N. notatus* and *N. japonicus*, can be easily distinguished by the absence of filamentous pelvic fins, which character, it shares with *N. bleekeri*. However, it differs from *N. bleekeri* in not having a conspicuous pinkish spot on the opercle, and in

having four greenish-yellow bands in the anal fin in the fresh condition. The pectoral fins are also relatively shorter, while in *N. bleekeri* they are almost as long as the head. The first ray of the pelvic fin is produced into a long filament which when adpressed does not surpass the second anal spine in *N. bleekeri* while it is more elongated and reaches the first anal ray in *N. delagoae*.

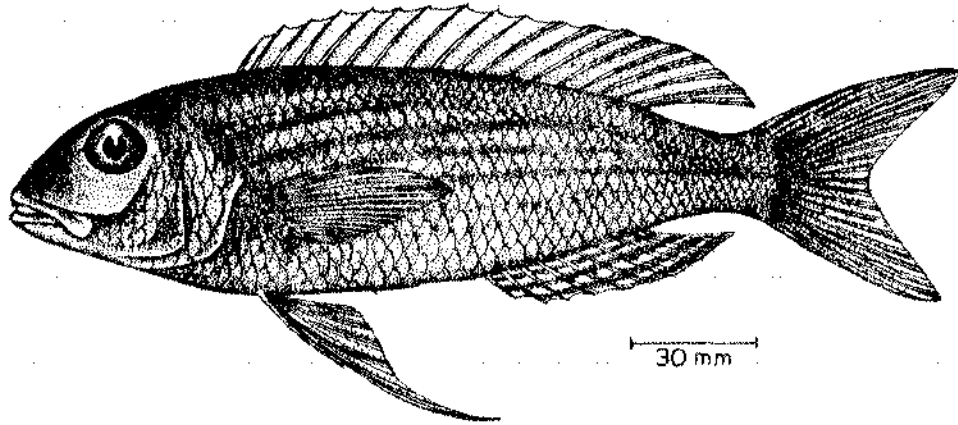


FIG. 1. *Nemipterus delagoae* Smith; male, 231 mm total length.

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