

ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *MALACANTHUS HOEDTII* BLEEKER  
(FAM: MALACANTHIDAE) IN THE ANDAMAN SEA.

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The occurrence of *Malacanthus hoedtii* Bleeker is reported for the first time from the Andaman Sea. The various body measurements of *M. hoedtii* are compared with those of *M. latovittatus* and the range of distribution of the two species in the tropical Indo-Pacific Ocean is discussed.

Fishes of the family Malacanthidae are wide-spread in the tropical Indo-Pacific Ocean. The family comprises of three recognised species, *Malacanthus hoedtii* Bleeker, *Malacanthus latovittatus* (Lacepede) and *Dikellorhynchus incredibilis* Smith. *M. hoedtii* has so far been recorded from Pulu Weh, Sumatra, Ternate, New Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritius, Okinawa, Philippines, Louisiade Archipelago, Caroline Islands, Hawaii, Lord Howe Island, New Zealand (Weber and de Beaufort, 1936) and Bazaruto Island on the east coast of South Africa (Smith, 1961). *M. latovittatus* has been recorded from Simalur, Sumatra, Celebes, Flores, Ambon, Ternate, Batjan, New Guinea, Bourbon, Mauritius, Okinawa, Philippines, Micronesia, Polynesia (Weber and de Beaufort, 1936), Madagascar (Bleeker, 1878), Ceylon (Day, 1889, Munro, 1958) and Delagoa Bay on the east coast of South Africa (Smith, 1961). *D. incredibilis* appears to have a very limited distribution as it has so far been recorded only near Port Alfred in South Africa (Smith, 1961).

Although no positive record of the occurrence of the species of *Malacanthus* along the Indian coast is available, it is quite likely that at least *M. latovittatus* may occur around the coasts of South India since it has been reported from the coastal waters of Ceylon. Herre (1939, 1940) has not mentioned the occurrence of any of the species of this family from the Andaman Sea. But *M. latovittatus* is known to occur around Andaman Islands since a specimen of this species collected in 1954 from Port Blair is available in the reference collection of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. Subsequently also a few specimens of *M. latovittatus* have been collected from this area.

The present note records the occurrence of *M. hoedtii* from the Andaman Sea for the first time. A specimen of *M. hoedtii*, measuring 165 mm in

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standard length, was collected at Port Blair on 18-2-1969. It shows some interesting variations in meristic characters and hence a short description is given below. For an illustration of the species reference is invited to Smith (1961, p. 567). *Malacanthus hoedtii* Bleeker

D. V. 51; A. I. 49; P. 16; V. I. 5; C. i 15 i; L1. 167; L. tr. 8/1/25 (between lateral line and anal origin); G. R. 6/1/8.

Weber and de Beaufort (1936) mention 57 and 50-51 divided rays in the dorsal and anal fins respectively for this species. The illustration provided by Smith reveals 53 divided rays in the dorsal and 50 in the anal fin. The present specimen from Port Blair (Fig. 1) exhibits only 51 divided rays in the dorsal and 49 in the anal fin. However, the numbers of divided rays in the dorsal and anal fins of the specimen are well within the range of variation given for these characters by Weber and de Beaufort in the generic description.

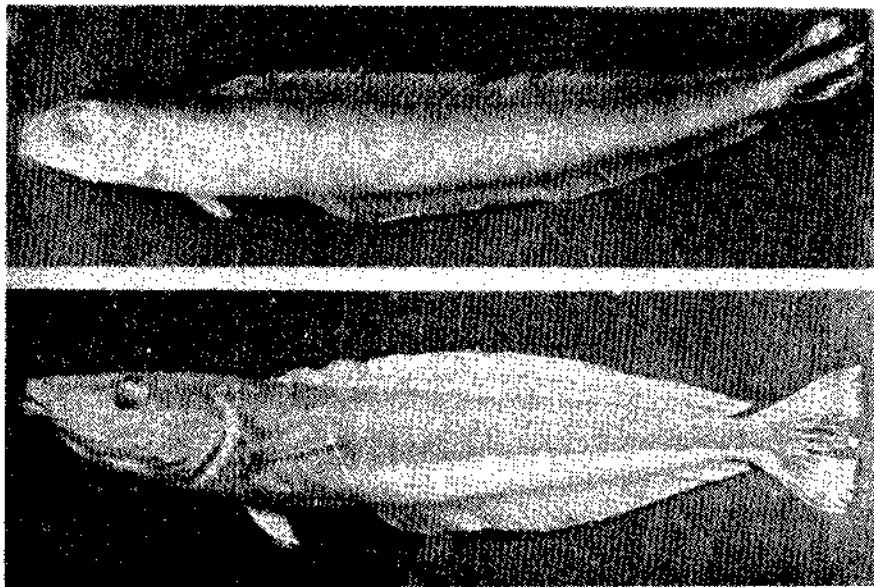


Fig. 1. *Above*: Lateral view of *Malacanthus hoedtii* Bleeker. Standard length 165 mm. Port Blair, Andamans. *Below*: Lateral view of *Malacanthus lotovitatus* (Lacepede). Standard length 291 mm. Brookestad, Andamans.

The colour of formalin-preserved specimen is grey above, sides and below pearly white. About 20 slightly curved faint bands on the body, not reaching ventral profile, from pectoral region to caudal peduncle. A converging black band on the upper and lower caudal lobes. Caudal yellowish in between the black bands, above and below the bands brown. Dorsal, anal, pectoral and ventral fins light brown.

The various body proportions of *M. hoedtii* are compared with a specimen of *M. latovittatus*, measuring 291 mm in standard length (Table 1), collected near Brookestad, about 8 km south of Port Blair on 18-6-1966.

TABLE 1. *Body measurements of M. hoedtii and M. latovittatus in thousandths of standard length*

Body measurements	<i>Malacanthus hoedtii</i>	<i>Malacanthus latovittatus</i>
Standard length	165 mm	291 mm
Length of snout	67	141
Diameter of eye	48	48
Interorbital distance	67	90
Length of maxilla	79	103
Length of head	218	306
Pre-pectoral distance	224	317
Pre-dorsal distance	230	317
Pre-ventral distance	224	340
Pre-anal distance	370	498
Depth of body at dorsal origin	127	179
Length of pectoral	158	175
Length of ventral	91	93
Height of dorsal fin	91	90
Height of anal fin	91	86
Height of caudal peduncle	55	62

From the table it is evident that *M. hoedtii*, as compared to *M. latovittatus*, has shorter snout, interorbital, maxilla, head, pectoral fin, pre-pectoral, pre-dorsal, pre-ventral and pre-anal distances and a narrower body.

Both the species have a wide distribution ranging from the central Pacific to the western Indian Ocean and their occurrence in the Andaman Sea is therefore expected.

The specimen of *M. hoedtii* has been deposited in the reference collections of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (Reg. No. C.M.F.R.I.F. 88/635).

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