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DESTRUCTION OF EGGS OF CATFISH, *TACHYSURUS TENUISPINIS* BY PURSE SEINERS AT KARWAR*

The unwarranted destruction of huge quantities of eggs of catfish, *Tachysurus tenuispinis* by purse seiners in 1980 at Mangalore, Malpe and Gangoli of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka and its grave consequences was highlighted earlier in these columns (Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv. T&E Ser,24 1980). In view of this, it was expected that due care would be exercised in the fishery by purse seiners, especially during September and October which happens to be the spawning season for *T.tenuispinis*. But this year also the same catastrophe is being repeated. There seems to be no regulation on the purse seine fleet operating in Uttar Kannada region in order to avoid indiscriminate fishing.

During September 1982 these seiners operating from Karwar landed catfish *T.tenuispinis* along with eggs in large quantities. The eggs landed amounted to 3.9 tonnes between 23rd and 29th September and again weighing 2.3 tonnes from 8th to 21st October. The catch details are given below:

These fishes were caught in the region 45-50 km north and south, almost equidistant from

Date	Catch of <i>T.tenuispinis</i> Adults (kg)	Eggs (kg)
22nd September 1982	200	—
23rd "	4,000	175
24th "	3,500	120
25th "	9,000	775
26th "	61,000	2,050
27th "	5,000	175
29th "	14,000	575
30th "	14,000	—
8th October	2,000	225
9th "	1,000	110
10th "	7,100	525
11th "	7,200	550
14th "	100	15
21st "	8,000	850
Total	1,36,100	6,145

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Fig. 1. Catch of catfish *T.tenuispinis* with incubating eggs landed by purse seiner at Karwar.



Fig. 2. Eggs of *T.tenuispinis* in baskets for disposal.

Karwar in the depth range of 20-30 m. The total length ranged from 210 mm to 390 mm with modes at 310 mm, 330 mm and 350 mm, about 3,000 nos weighing 1 tonne (Fig.1). The price varied from Rs.22 to Rs.50 per 100 nos. The fishermen had better financial returns initially. Later the prices slumped because of catch of other fishes. As there is a limited local market for consumption in fresh condition, practically all the catches were packed in ice and transported by lorries to Mangalore and further south. Some found their way to Bombay markets also.

Almost all the catch consisted of males, most of them carrying eggs in their mouth. The maximum number of eggs counted in the mouth of a single fish was as high as 46, with diameter varying from 10 to 12 mm. The estimated catch of eggs amounted to 4.5% of the total catch of *T.tenuispinis*. It is likely that large quantities of eggs must have escaped through the meshes of the

seines during the operations. It was the first time that eggs in mouth incubating condition in such huge quantities were landed at Karwar (Fig.2). There being no demand for these eggs, their disposal posed a problem and this was solved easily by discarding them either on the wharf or dumping them into the Baithkal cove.

It was estimated that 4.3 million eggs were destroyed in this process, and the enormity of the destruction to the resource could very well be imagined. In view of this, it is felt that the indiscriminate fishing of these catfishes with incubating eggs should be curbed without any further delay, in order to save the resource from complete depletion. Steps may have to be taken on priority basis in educating the fishermen about the adverse effects this sort of indiscriminate destruction of mature fishes and incubating eggs might have on the resource.

