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UNUSUALLY HEAVY LANDING OF KING SEER FISH AT NEW FERRY WARF, BOMBAY*

Unusually large quantity of King seer fish *Scomberomorus commerson* (Lacepede) was landed at New Ferry Wharf fishing jetty at Bombay. The landing of King seer fish, locally known as 'Surmai', started in late

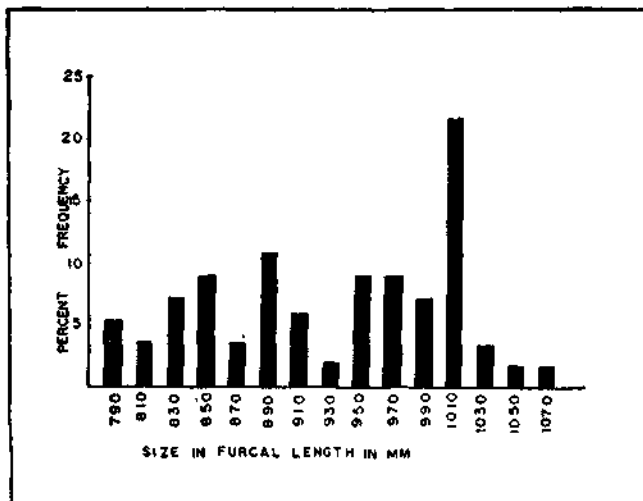


Fig. 1. Size distribution of *S. commerson*.

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September and lasted till early November for about a month. In October, 1986 alone, the landing of this species was estimated to be 2,112.4 tonnes, constituting 26.6% of the total fish catch for the month. The quantity landed during this short period was far greater than the annual average landing of 526.4 tonnes for the past



Fig. 2. Part of the heavy catch of King seer fish landed at New Ferry Wharf, Bombay.

three years, which also included the landing of *S. guttatus*, usually a dominant species.

The catch was landed by the trawlers operating at 50–60 m depth off Bassein, an area 60 km north of Bombay. The fishes were caught by means of hooks of size 10–15 cm, baited with pieces of *Saurida tumbil* and *Nemipterus japonicus*. About 3–4 hooks were operated from each vessel. Each hook yielded 40–50 King seer fishes per day during the fishing period. On an average, 612 kg of King seer fish were landed by each trawler, but on certain days their catch exceeded 2.5 tonnes per boat trip.

The size of the fish varied from 790 to 1070 mm in furcal length with a dominant mode at 1010 mm

(Fig. 1). The weight of fish ranged from 3.1 to 9.7 kg. Examination of few degutted specimens revealed that the ovaries of females were in the spent stage. Their guts were full and showed presence of *Saurida tumbil*, *Nemipterus japonicus*, *Apogon* sp. etc. The presence of spent ovaries and full stomachs and their falling impulsively to the bait may suggest that this shoal was returning after spawning and had voracious feeding behaviour.

Due to the unusually large catch the price of King seer fish, which is otherwise quite high (Rs.15–20 per kg) fell to mere Rs. 4–6 per kg. However, this unusual catch benefitted the fishermen by an additional income of about Rs. 3,000 per trip. Most of the catch was bought by the processors for filleting and whole freezing.

