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Occurrence of cockatoo righteye flounder, *Samaris cristatus* (Gray, 1831) along the Malabar coast

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Flatfishes are readily distinguished from all other fishes by their compressed body and head with both eyes on the same side, either on the right or left. They belong to the order Pleuronectiformes and are divided into eleven families Achiridae, Achirosetidae, Bothidae, Citharidae, Cynoglossidae, Paralichthyidae, Pleuronectidae, Psettodidae, Samaridae, Scopthalmidae and Soleidae. The fishes belonging to the family Samaridae have eyes on the right side of head. They occur in all the oceans and about 20 species belonging to three genera are found worldwide.

Flatfishes form an important demersal fishery resource in the north Kerala. Among the flatfishes, family Cynoglossidae alone supports the commercial fishery in this region and the occurrence of flatfishes of other families are not common. One specimen belonging to the family Samaridae was observed in the trawl discard sample collected from Beypore harbour on 16.08.08. On enquiry, it was found that the specimen was caught off Calicut in the bottom

trawling operation by a commercial trawler from the fishing area between 11° and 12° N latitude at a depth

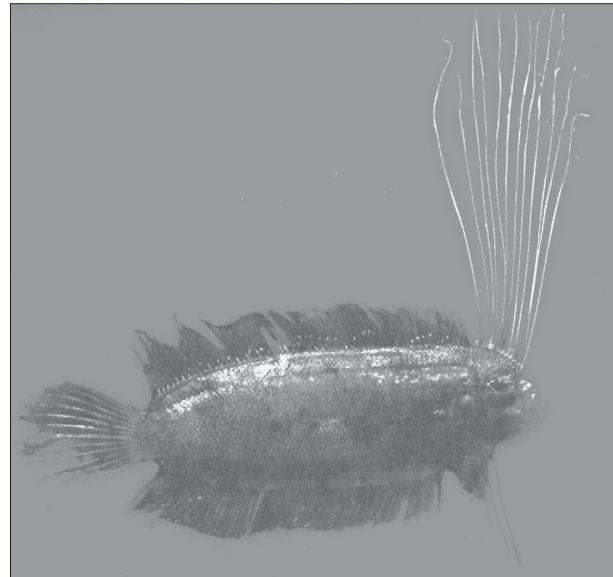


Fig. 1. *Samaris cristatus* landed along the Malabar coast

of 50 m. The specimen was identified as *Samaris cristatus*. The distinguishing characters are that it is brown in colour with brownish blotches along the upper and lower edge of the body. Anterior dorsal-fin rays and rays of pelvic fin on eyed side are elongate and filamentous; all caudal-fin rays unbranched. Anterior dorsal rays are white, rest of fins brown. Body scales are smooth. Dorsal fin with

84 soft rays, first 13 dorsal rays greatly prolonged. Anal fin with 56 soft rays. Lateral line scales 76. Dorsal and anal fins are dusky, while pectoral fin is blackish. Caudal fin with 16 unbranched rays and rounded margin. The total length of specimen was 135 mm and weight 28 g (Fig. 1). There is no previous authentic record on the occurrence of *S. cristatus* from this area.