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ON BUMPER CATCHES OF LIZARD FISHES AT SASSOON DOCK, BOMBAY*

Lizard fishes of the genus *Saurida* are not highly esteemed food fishes along Maharashtra and Gujarat coasts. Eventhough their appearance in the catches is not significant, landings by trawlers are showing fishery value for these fishes particularly at Sassoon Dock, Bombay during months of March, April and May. The interest of the fishermen in landing these fishes is

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due to the fact that during March-May good quality fishes like pomfrets are scarce and fishes considered as trash during other times are in demand. In the case of *Saurida*, landings which consisted of two species *Saurida tumbil* and *Saurida undosquamis* are of special interest as the landings are sent outside Maharashtra in iced condition. Lizard fishes are known as 'Chor Bombil' in Marathi. A brief description of its landings over the years from 1986 with particular emphasis on bumper catches in 1989 is given in Table 1 along with

some biological observations based on samples collected from the field.

Table 1. Catch particulars of lizard fishes landed at Sassoon Dock during 1986-'89

Year	Period	Gear	Depth (m)	Catch (t)	C.P.U. (kg)
1986	Mar.-May	Trawl	40-70	199.5	40.8
1987	"	"	"	138.5	29.8
1988	"	"	"	780.5	145.3
1989	"	"	"	1,210	219.5

It can be seen from the Table that lizard fishes mentioned above have been contributing to fishery though landings were small in 1986 compared to that of 1989. The fishing grounds for the species are located off Sriwardhan and Murud coasts with depth extending upto 70 m.

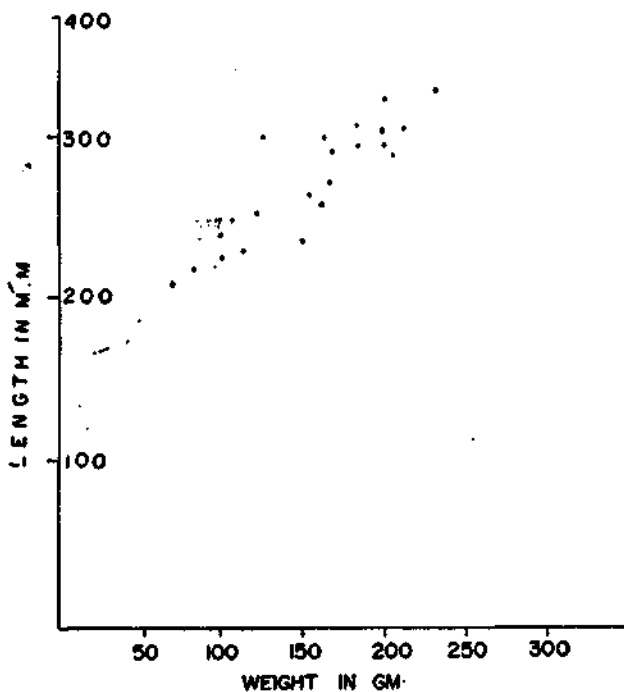


Fig. 1. Scatter diagram showing length-weight relationship of *Saurida tumbil*.

Biological observations: The landings comprised two species *Saurida tumbil* and *S. undosquamis*. The percentage of their occurrence during 1989 landings is

noted to be 80% of *S. tumbil* and 20% of *S. undosquamis*. The length-weight relationship of these two species are given in figs. 1 and 2 in the form of scatter diagram based on sample studies. The maximum length recorded for *S. tumbil* is 437 mm and *S. undosquamis* 327 mm. The size of 437 mm recorded for *S. tumbil* appears to be the largest for the species from Indian waters.

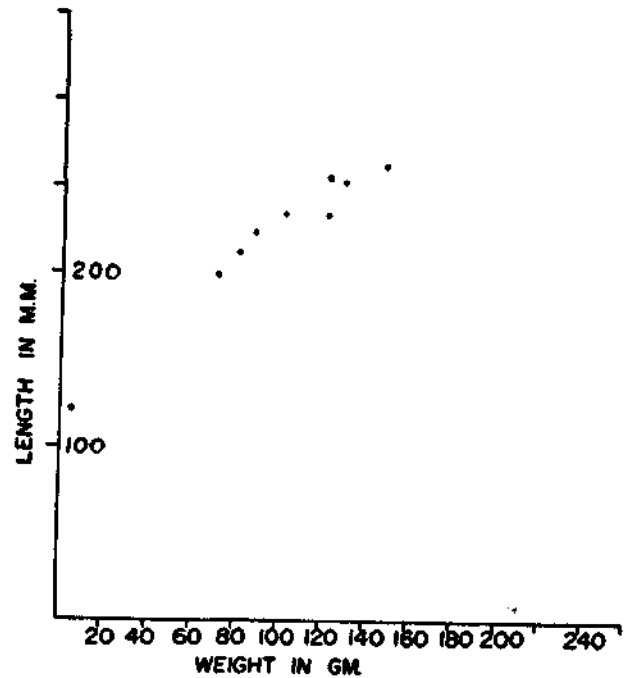


Fig. 2. Scatter diagram showing length-weight relationship of *Saurida undosquamis*.

Food: Food items from the stomachs of 40 specimens of *S. tumbil* and 12 specimens of *S. undosquamis* have been studied. Both the species contained whole specimens of *Upeneus*, *Nemipterus*, *Apogon* and young ones of *S. tumbil* and *S. undosquamis*, thus suggesting piscivorous food habit amounting to cannibalism. Though cuttle fish and *Loligo* were noted, crustaceans were not recorded. The food habits are in agreement with the findings recorded in F.A.O. identification sheets (1984).

Maturity: No specimens with mature or running ovaries were seen. This indicated that both the species breed outside the months of March to May.

