

Sujit Sundaram and A. D. Sawant
Mumbai Research Centre of CMFRI, Mumbai

Octopus fishery is gaining momentum in India especially along the north-west coast. The major centres in Mumbai where octopi are landed by trawlers are New Ferry Wharf, Sassoon docks and Versova. Cephalopods comprise about 10.5% of trawl landings of Maharashtra with octopus contributing 7.1% (CMFRI, 2006). *Cistopus indicus* dominates the octopus fishery in Mumbai waters (Sujit Sundaram and Sarang, 2004).

Apart from *C. indicus* and *Octopus membranaceus*, *Octopus dollfusi* (Fig. 1) commonly called as 'marbled octopus' is also observed regularly at New Ferry Wharf. This octopus is a benthic species living in shallow waters. It is distributed along Indo-China and Hong Kong (Roper *et al.*, 1984).

The important distinguishing characters of *O. dollfusi* are elongated oval mantle and inconspicuous eyes. The arms are moderately long and stout with the dorsal arms being the shortest.

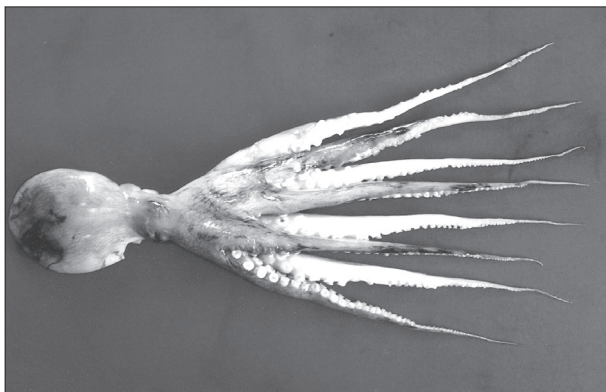


Fig. 1. *Octopus dollfusi* Robson, 1928

The mantle, head and arms are covered dorsally with numerous large reticulate warts, with each unit bordered by a darkly pigmented line. Some of the larger suckers at the base of the arms are bluish in colour.

In Mumbai, the species occurred among other species of octopus during December-May. The depth of fishing operation was about 30-40 m, 70-80 km off the north-west coast. The mantle length of the species landed at New Ferry Wharf ranged from 50 to 90 mm during December - March while larger specimens upto 120 mm were observed during April - May. According to Roper *et al.* (1984), the maximum mantle length of this species is 90 mm. Among the 18 specimens analysed, only two were females. Majority had guts with 'trace' and 'empty' condition and the food was in finely macerated condition. The species was found to mainly feed on 'prawns' followed by 'fish'.

Sarvesan (1969) made some observations on the brooding behavior of this species. Meiyappan and Mohamed (2003) recorded occurrence of this species along Chennai and Cochin coasts. According to Kripa *et al.* (2000), *O. dollfusi* contributed to about 3% of the octopus fishery in Cochin while in Mumbai waters it contributed only 1%.

Earlier, octopus resources were exported. However, due to the opening of many Chinese restaurants in Mumbai recently, local demand for octopus has emerged, fetching moderately high price. The cost of *C. indicus* is Rs. 60/kg while *O. dollfusi* fetches Rs. 40/kg at the landing centres.