

Rekha, J. Nair, Sijo Paul and Dinesh Kumar, S.
Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi

The family Molidae comprises epipelagic fish commonly known as molas or ocean sunfish, which are distributed in warm, tropical waters in all the oceans (Matsuura, 2002). Among the sunfishes described, *Masturus lanceolatus* is considered rare on the Indian coast. Four species described in this family are: *Ranzania laevis* (Pennant 1776), *Mola mola* (Linnaeus 1758), *Masturus lanceolatus* (Liénard 1840) and *Mola ramsayi* (Giglioli 1883), which is restricted to the southern hemisphere (Parenti 2003; Bass *et al.*, 2005). *M. lanceolatus*, commonly known as the sharptail mola, has broad distribution in the western Atlantic, occurring from Nova Scotia to south-eastern Brazil.

Morphometric measurements for the collected could not be taken before the fish was cut. Measurements for the *M. lanceolatus* were taken directly in the field before the fish was cut and auctioned to retailers. Based on the available information and literature, the species was identified as *Masturus lanceolatus*. The species was caught at a depth of 100 m in a drift gill net operated on the Southwest coast.

Body deep, highly compressed, ovate, depth 1.3 in SL. Dorsal profile of head sloped; eyes moderate, diameter 17.2 in SL; mouth small with

fused teeth; snout length 5.5 in SL; dorsal and anal fins similar in shape, placed posteriorly on body just before caudal fin origin, lengths 2.1 and 2.5 in SL respectively. Caudal fin tapering gradually, fleshy, pointed tail, length 2.6 in SL. Skin very thick and leathery with small denticles. Colour uniform grey with pale blotches. Gill openings very small, in front of pectoral fins. The morphometric details are given in Table 1. The present record is from the south west coast off Cochin and is the second largest specimen recorded from India recorded after a gap of 59 years from the west coast of India. Though Bandana *et al.* (2012) reports that the fish has no market value in Parangipettai, Tamilnadu, the fish was cut (Fig. 1) as soon as it was landed in Cochin Fisheries Harbour showing the economic importance of the species.

Table 1. Morphometric measurements of *M. lanceolatus* Liénard 1840

Characters	(in mm)
Total length	1705
Standard length	1205
Body depth	890
Eye diameter	70
Snout length	220
Dorsal fin length	570
Anal fin length	480
Caudal fin length at pointed tip	460