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NOTES AND COMMENTS

A NOTE ON THE COMMERCIAL AND SPORT FISHING FOR SOME OF THE MAJOR SCOMBROID FISHES AND WAHOO ON THE KENYA COAST

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great interest and demand for Scombroid fish especially the Seer fish (*Scomberomorus commerson* - King-fish and *Scomberomorus lineolatus* - Barega) and the Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) on the Kenya coast both for food and sport fishing. The fish species are priced high on local markets. A kilogramme fetches six and nine Kenya shillings at Malindi and Mombasa fish markets respectively.

Fishing surveys, taxonomic and biological studies have been carried out in considerable detail (MERRETT AND THORP 1965; WILLIAMS 1956, 1960 and 1962) but due to urgent need for accelerated marine fisheries development in East Africa based on pelagic fishery resources, more information is needed for evaluation of the magnitude and potential yield of these important commercial fish species.

DATA COLLECTION

Commercial Seerfish and Wahoo catches were examined monthly during 1973 and 1974 at Malindi fish market where also fish from Ngomeni, Nambrui, Watamu and Kilifi were landed. Annual commercial catch data was compiled from Kenya Government Fisheries records at Malindi for 1973 and 1974. Sport fishing data was compiled from Angling Club log books at Bakari and Outrigger Clubs at Mombasa,

Mnarani Club at Kilifi, Pemba Channel fishing club at Shimoni and sport fishing data for Malindi and Watamu was collected from Kenya Government fisheries records. Figure 1 shows the location of fish landings and sport fishing clubs on the Kenya Coast.

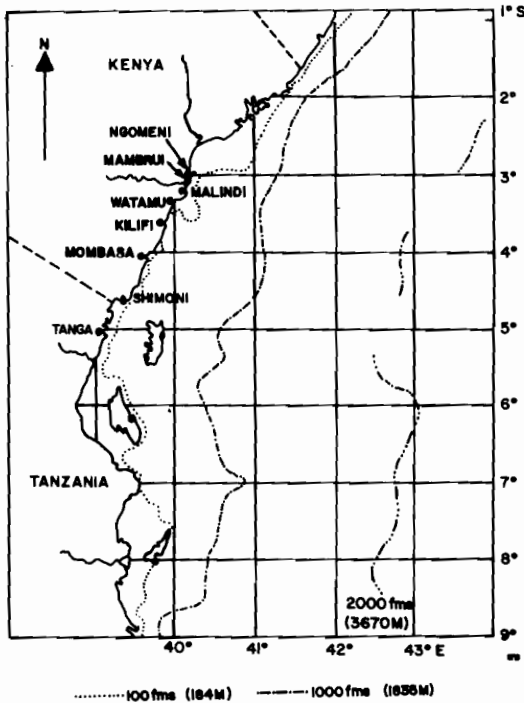


Fig. 1. Position of Fish landings and sport fishing clubs on the Kenya coast, East Africa.

Monthly fish catch data from the clubs was for the period 1964 - 1973 and was based on the total numbers and total weight of the individual fish species landed. The average monthly rainfall (mm) and wind speed (knots) as recorded at Malindi Airport was collected from Meteorological Department - Nairobi.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Boats and fishing gear:

Two to four fishermen operated from small unmotorised canoes (Dhows and outrigger canoes). They caught the fish mainly by handling during the day. Herrings, squid and octopus were used as bait. Multifilament

gillnets of 6 inch (152.4mm) and shark nets of 8 inch (203.2mm) to 10 inch (254.0mm) surface set during the periods of low moon light were also used. The Angling clubs on the other hand operated from big motorized boats. Due to lack of efficient crafts and out board engines, the local fishermen exploited the fisheries in nearshore regions especially close to the reefs.

During 1973 and 1974 a total of 10,373 of *S. lineolatus* weighing 32,832 kg, 4682 of *S. commerson* (30,685 kg) and 425 of *A. solandri* (4,682 kg) were landed at Malindi fish market. However, for Angling Clubs the target was mainly to the larger fish (*S. commerson* and *A. solandri*).

There were two major fishing peaks in a year. The highest peak was observed during February to April and a smaller peak in August to December in commercial catches while for Angling Clubs there were two high peaks during January to March and August to December. These were the periods when rains were generally low (average monthly rainfall 32mm and wind speed generally below 9 knots. These conditions were generally favourable for fishing activities. These observations at Malindi fish market for the commercial pelagic fish species under review, closely agree with those of MERRETT and THORP, (1965), WILLIAMS (1962, 1960) who recorded the greatest catches of *S. commerson* and *S. lineolatus* in September and October and November to March in East African coastal waters. Large schools of fish had been observed in August to September at Malindi.

The period of long rains during April to July

corresponded to low fish landings at Malindi. The intensity of rains, and extent of wind speed had an effect on the quantity of fish landed by commercial fishermen and Anglers. However, the tourism season during September to March boosts the quantity of fish landed by Angling Clubs.

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