

Differentiating two closely resembling ariid species of *Nemapteryx* genus

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Genus *Nemapteryx* is globally represented by six species of which three are distributed in Indo-Pacific waters viz. *Nemapteryx nenga* (Hamilton, 1822), *Nemapteryx caelata* (Valenciennes, 1840) and *Nemapteryx macronotacantha* (Bleeker, 1846).

N. caelata is a relatively bigger sized species with a maximum recorded size of 45 cm total length (TL) whereas the maximum size of other two species is limited to 30 cm TL (Froese and Pauly, 2018, World Wide Web electronic Publication,



Fig. 1. *Nemapteryx caelata* (26.2 cm TL)

www.fishbase.org). The validity of *N. caelata* as species was questioned and believed to be a variant of *N. nenga*. The species presently enjoys the status of a valid species, but it needs a thorough assessment to completely rule out the possibility of it being a junior synonym of *N. nenga*. *N. caelata* forms a good fishery especially along the North west coast of India. The species is characterized by highly engraved bony shield on the head, a pair of palatine teeth and very strong dorsal and pectoral spines. *N. macronotacantha* closely resembles small or medium sized *N. caelata* and is mostly misidentified in the field. A close examination especially shape of teeth patch can clearly separates the two species. *N. caelata* has strongly triangular palatine teeth



Fig. 2. *Nemapteryx macronotacantha* (14.6 cm TL)

patch whereas the shape is oblong in case *N. macronotacantha*. Difference in morphometric characters such as longer pre-2nd dorsal, inter-orbital and inter-nostril lengths in *N. caelata* whereas larger eye diameter and longer barbels in *N. macronotacantha*, is reported (Kailola, 1999 *FAO species identification guide for fishery purposes. The living marine resources of the Western Central Pacific.*, Rome, FAO, 1827-1879 pp.). The incidence of *N. macronotacantha* along northwest coast of India is higher than reported which is due to misidentification of the species as juvenile or sub-adult of *N. caelata*. A closer examination in the field is required to explore the spatio-temporal abundance of the various catfish species from the region.