Sucker Fish (Spearfish Remora) Remora brachyptera (Lowe, 1839) Rare Occurrence in Mumbai Waters

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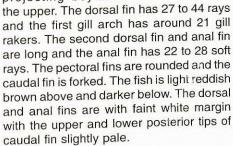
Sucker fishes generally attach themselves to many different marine vertebrates including sharks, rays, tarpons, barracudas, sailfishes, marlins, swordfishes, jacks, basses, groupers, ocean sunfish, sea turtles, whales and dolphins. The Family Echeneidae to which sucker fishes belong is divisible into two subfamilies, four genera and eight species, seven of which occur in the Western Indian Ocean (Fischer and Bianchi, 1984).

While the common sucker fish species found along Mumbai waters is Echeneis naucrates which is commonly called as 'Shark sucker', on 4 september 2009, a single speciman of an unusual species of sucker fish was observed at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai. This sucker fish was stouter than others and the sucking plate was long. The fish was caught by trawl net operated at a depth of about 30-40 m, off Northwest coast at a distance of 70 - 80 km from the coast. As the sucker fish looks very much similar to catfish, fishermen had placed it along with the catfish catch. This sucker fish was later identified as Remora brachyptera (Lowe, 1839) (Fig 1 and 2) and is commonly called as 'Spearfish remora'. Usually this species is found on the body of bill fishes and sword fishes and rarely on other fishes (Eschmeyer et al., 2008). The species is distributed in Western Atlantic - Nova Scotia, Canada to Brazil, Eastern Central Atlantic to Madeira Island (Wirtz et al., 2008 and Riede, 2004). There seems to be no past record of this species caught from Mumbai waters.

The taxonomic position of *R. brachyptera* is: Superclass: Osteichthyes, Class: Actinopterygii, Subclass: Neopterygii, Infra class: Teleostei,

S u p e r o r d e r : Acanthopterygii, Order: Perciformes, Suborder: Percoidei, Family: Echeneidae.

The body of this fish is cylindrical and elongate, possessing an oblong cephalic disc with 14 to 17 transverse laminae and the cranium is depressed. Posterior end of the sucking before is disc posterior end of pectoral fins. The jaws are broad with lower one projecting beyond



According to Froese and Pauly (2009), the maximum total length of the species is 50 cm. The total length of the speciman landed at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai was 55 cm and weighed 2.5 kg. The present specimen seems to be the largest ever recorded.

There were no other species of sucker fish landed at the landing centre on that day but heavy landing of catfish fishes was observed especially of *Arius tenuipes*. Since the specimen was cut at the head region by the fisherwomen for sale, it could



Fig 1 : Dorsal View of Remora brachyptera



Fig 2: Ventral View of Remora brachyptera

not be preserved.

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