RICHARDSONICHTHYS LEUCOGASTER (RICH) (PISCES : SCORPAENIDAE) A NEW DISTRIBUTIONAL RECORD FOR INDIAN SEAS

ABSTRACT

Richardsonichthys leucogaster (Rich) Family : Scorpaenidae has been recorded for the first time from Indian waters (Porto Novo coast). This species is illustrated and the description based on 28 specimens (32-53 mm S. L.) is also given.

TWENTY-EIGHT specimens of *Richardsonichthys leucogaster* (Rich) ranging from 32-53 mm S. L. were obtained from fish collections between 28-9-'74 and 21-10-'74 from trawl nets operated at a depth of 50-60 m in the Bay of Bengal off Porto Novo (11°29′N, 79°49′ E). This species has not so far been recorded from the Indian coast.

Richardsonichthys leucogaster (Richardson) 1848.

Apistus leucogaster Richardson, *Zoology Samarang, Fishes* 1848, p. 5; Bleeker, *Nat. Tijdschr. Ned. Indie* IV, 1853, p. 111.

Prosopodasys leucogaster Gunther, *Cat. Brit. Mus.* II, 1860, p. 141; Kner, *Sitzber. Akad. Wien* LVIII, 1868, p. 309; Playfair, *Proc. Zool. Soc. London*, 1869, p. 240.

Gymnapistus leucogaster Bleeker, *Atlas Ichth. Ind. Neerl.* IX, 1877, pl. CCCCXI, fig. 6; M. Weber, *Siboga Exped. Fische*, 1913, p. 502; Herre, *Philipp. Journ. Sci.*, 80, No. 4, 1952, p. 451.

Paracentropogon leucoprosopon M. Weber, *Siboga Exp. Fische*, 1913, p. 498.

? Tetraroge albifrons Duncker & Mohr. *Mit. Zool. Mus. Hamburg* XLIV, 1929, p. 70 (Proparte).

Vespicula leucogaster Herre, *Bull. Raffles Mus.* No. 16, 1940, p. 48.

Material examined : 28 specimens (32-53 mm S. L.) Porto Novo (INDIA) Coll. Ramanathan and Bhagyalakshmi, 28-9-'74 to 21-10-'74 BSRM Reg. No. Q 439/2.

Description : Based on 28 specimens (32-53 mm S. L.) 9 Male, 14 Female and 5 Juvenile from Porto Novo.

D. XIII 8 ; A III 6-III 7 ; P. I 14-I 15 ; V. I 5. In percentages of Standard length body depth 26. 3-38.2 (mean-33.99); head length-39.7-47.3 (mean—43.4), head depth 29.7-42.1 (mean-36.7), snout length-9.5-13.9 (mean—11.6), eye diameter 7.6-12.5 (mean—9.6), inter orbital space 7.6- 11.8 (mean—10.4), post orbital length 21.6-31.6 (mean—21.1), pectoral fin length 31.5-40.7 (mean—34.6), pelvic fin length-18.2-28.2 (mean—22.2), pre-dorsal distance 18.2-26.3 (mean—21.3), pre-pelvic distance 32.9-51.5 (mean—38.7), pre-anal distance 49.0-68.9 (mean—62.3).

Body short, and moderately compressed ; maxilla reaches behind eye ; villiform bands of teeth in jaws, on vomer and on palatines; preorbital with two spines, anterior one short and directed downwards, posterior one directed backwards and larger, about two-thirds of eye ; hindborder of preopercle with a long spine and four shorter ones below it ; three diverging opercular spines present, superior spine poorly developed ; a deep groove on each side of dorsal, above posterior part of eye (Fig. 1).

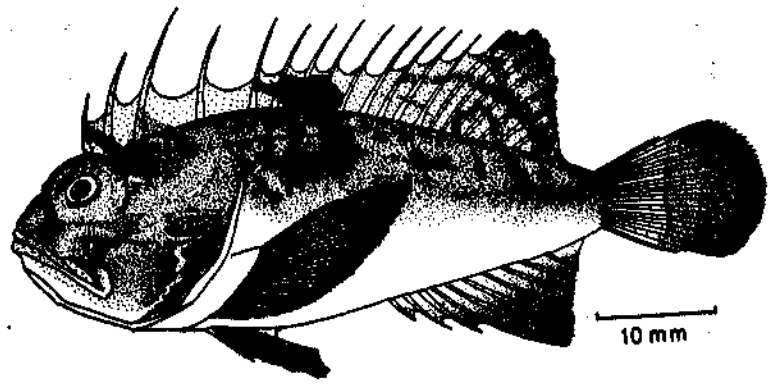

Fig. 1. *Richardsonichthys leucogaster* (Rich) (49 mm S. L.)

Origin of dorsal above or just behind eye ; first dorsal spine more or less half length of second, which is slightly less than third ; third spine about as long as snout and eye ; following spines slightly shorter than third one ; anal spines gradually increasing in length from first to third which is as long as snout ; pectorals almost as long as head ; Caudal slightly rounded.

Colour : Live specimens are pinkish red, brown to purplish above and marbled with darker brown ; thorax and belly white; dorsals and pectorals mottled or banded

with brown ; a large dark spot basally on 5th-8th dorsal spines ; other fins similarly marked or with darker areas distally ; pale areas are rose in life.

Distribution : This species has been reported from Singapore, Lombok, Ceram, Timor, between Misool and Salawatti ; New Guinea, (Munro, 1967) Zanzibar, Seychelles, Muscat, Baluchistan coast, China, Philippines, Australia (Adelaide) (De Beaufort & Briggs, 1962).

Notes on biology : Ten specimens were examined. The gut contents of the 10 specimens show that they feed on juvenile crabs, and young ones of prawns.

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Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology, Porto Novo 608 502, *Tamil Nadu.*

N. RAMANATHAN
S. BHAGYALAKSHMI
V. RAMAIYAN

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DE BEAUFORT, L. F. AND J. C. BRIGGS 1962. *The fishes of the Indo-Australian Archipelago*, XI : 401.