

ON THE LITTLE KNOWN MULLET, *VALAMUGIL BUCHANANI* (BLEEKER)
(MUGILIDAE : PISCES) IN THE INDIAN WATERS

ABSTRACT

The distinguishing characters between *Valamugil seheli* and *V. buchanani* are outlined and the occurrence of the latter species in the Indian waters is re-established.

In a revision of the Indian mugilidae Pillay (1962) included *Mugil buchanani* Bleeker = *Valamugil buchanani* (Bleeker) as one of the doubtful species. She has also pointed out that there is no record of this species from Indian waters subsequent to its original description from the river Hooghly by Bleeker (1853). According to her, *V. buchanani* may not remain valid as an independent species. However, Smith (1948) recognized under the genus *Valamugil* Smith two species, namely *V. seheli* (Forsskal) and *V. buchanani* (Bleeker), based on external characters. Munro (1955) also included these two species of *Valamugil* in his compilation on the marine and fresh water fishes of Sri Lanka. The aim of the present note, therefore, is to show that these two species of *Valamugil* could be distinguished not only by external characters but also on the structure of the pyloric caecae (Fig. a-d) and to confirm the validity of *V. buchanani* as an independent species. The key provided here clearly distinguishes the two species.

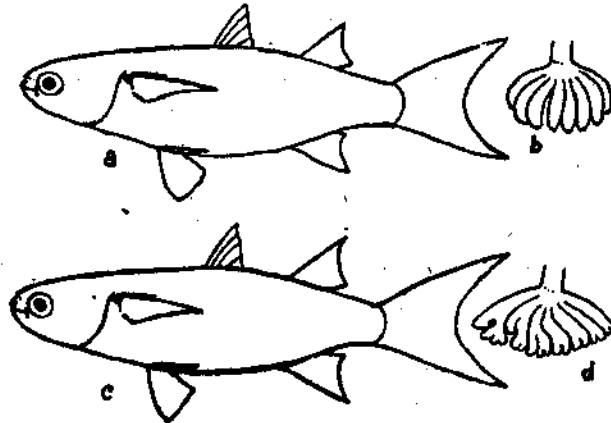


Fig. 1. a. *Valamugil seheli*; b. the pyloric caecae of *Valamugil seheli*; c. *Valamugil buchanani* and d. the pyloric caecae of *V. buchanani*.

The author observed *V. buchanani* seasonally along the coasts of the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar near Mandapam. Fishes of both sexes with mature gonads, ranging between 200 mm and 300 mm in fork length, are caught around Mandapam in cast nets and in 'Vidu valai' (Luther, 1965) during June-August. Juveniles of about 100 mm fork length of this species, together with *V. seheli* and *M. cunnesius* of similar length commonly occur in the lagoon near Mandapam during November to February when it is flooded with rain water. These three species were also observed in the catches from the Veli lake near Trivandrum. The apparent preference of

these species, when young, to less saline waters besides providing a clue to their natural habitat at this size, indicates their suitability for brackish water fish culture.

Distinguishing characters of the two species of Valamugil Smith :

1. Second dorsal and anal fins flacate ; longest dorsal ray longer than ventrals. Pyloric caecae 7-8, distal portion of each caecal lobe branched. L. 1. 33-36; 1. tr. 13.....*V. buehanani* (Bleeker)
2. Second dorsal and anal fins not flacate ; longest dorsal ray not longer than ventral. Pyloric caecae 6-9 (usually 7-8), distal portion of each caecal lobe entire. L. 1. 38-42 ; 1. tr. 14, rarely 15.....*V. seheli* (Forsskal)

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*Central Marine Fisheries
Research Institute,
Sub-station, Vizhinjam.*

G. LUTHER.

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