ABNORMAL DORSAL SPINE IN *TRIACANTHUS BREVIROSTRIS* (TEMMINCK AND SCHLEGEL)

ABSTRACT

An abnormal specimen of *Triacanthus brevirostris* with branched dorsal spine is reported in this communication.

Tricanthus brevirostris Temminck and Schlegel is a common marine fish and available in large numbers along the Bombay Coast from September to December. These fishes are characterised by a prominent hard dorsal spine and two hard pelvic ones.

One freak specimen of this fish collected on 14th September, 1984 had its dorsal spine branched. An X-ray photograph of this fish taken after its death on 5th December, 1984 revealed that the second spine has branched out from the main dorsal spine. This branch further shows a slight split at its tip. The length of the main dorsal spine (from the vertebral column) is 48 mm, that of the branch is 23 mm and the split is 2 mm.

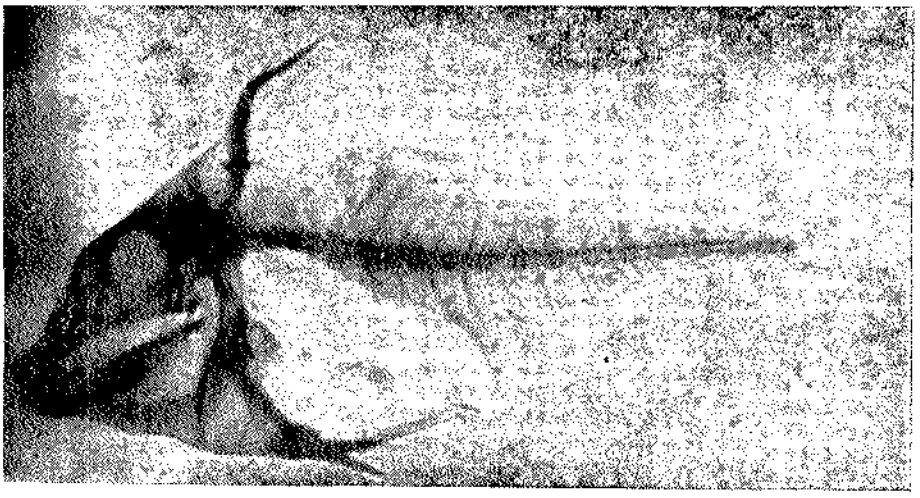

Fig. 1. *Triacanthus brevirostris* showing branched dorsal fin.

The cause of this branching is difficult to establish, but may probably have due to a previous injury.

Records of abnormal growths in fishes are rare. Such abnormalities are usually minute and hence escape notice. Abnormal growths in fishes have been recorded in *Stromateus cinereus* (Bloch) by Singh (1968), in *Caranx carangus* (Bloch) by Murthy (1974), in *Cynoglossus macrostomus* (Norman) by Seshappa and in *Eleutheronema tetradactylum* by Vijaya Gupta (1968). An interesting record has been made by Rao and Sinha (1968) in a Specimen of *Dendrophysa hooghliensis* (Sinha and Rao), a sciaenid. They have reported the presence of three anal spines instead of the

normal two (a characteristic of the Family Sciaenidae). However no records of abnormalities in dorsal spines of fishes are available to the author's knowledge. Hence the present instance appears to be the first one recorded in *Triacanthus brevirostris*.

Taraporevala Aquarium, Netaji Subhash Road, Bombay - 400 002

V. N. HEGDE

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THE STRANDING OF RORQUAL WHALE *BALAENOPTERA MUSCULUS* (LINNAEUS) IN THE GULF OF MANNAR

ABSTRACT

The note embodies observations on the stranding of a rorqual whale *Balaenoptera musculus* (Linnaeus) measuring 6.35 m in total length in the shallow waters off Ovari on 20-12-1976. This is the first recorded instance of stranding of this species alive along this coast. General morphological features are given. Instances of strandings in other parts of the country are also listed.

INSTANCES of whales getting stranded in the shallow waters of the Indian Coast and subsequently being washed ashore are not uncommon. Perhaps no other region in the east coast enjoys as much of reputation for the frequency of such strandings as in the case of Gulf of Mannar. This is aptly borne by a number of instances of whale stranding reported by Silas and Kumara Pillay (1960) and Alagarswami *et al.* (1973). From the available literature on the subject, it appears that the Rorqual whale *Balaenoptera musculus* frequents the coastal waters more often and gets stranded on many occasions. Fibbson - Hill (1950) remarked that the Blue Whale *Balaenoptera musculus* (Linnaeus) moves shoreward at intervals on the coasts of India and Sri Lanka. Prater (1915), Moses (1947), Nagabhushanam and Dhulkhed (1964), Venkataraman and Girijavallabhan (1966), Daniel (1963) and Bensam *et al.* (1972) have dealt with the Sibbald's Rorqual *Balaenoptera musculus*. The present note records one more instances of a recent stranding of *B. musculus* in the Gulf of Mannar, near Ovari, a fishing village (77° 54' E and 08° 16' N) on the early hours of 20–12–1976.