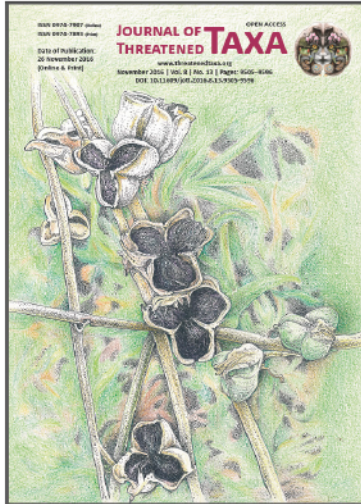


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### NOTE

**AN OCCURRENCE OF THE RARE SHARPTAIL MOLA *MASTURUS LANCEOLATUS* (LIENARD, 1840) (TETRAODONTIFORMES: MOLIDAE), IN THE COASTAL WATERS OF VISAKHAPATNAM, INDIA**

Muddula Krishna Naranji, Velamala Govinda Rao & Devara Venu

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Fishes of the family Molidae have a long taxonomic antiquity and currently three genera with four species are recognized (Parenti 2003). Sunfish are mostly found in the open ocean in warm temperate waters at all ocean depths of 200–300 m (Nelson 2006) and recorded from the Cape to East London (Smith & Heemstra 1986) they are mainly an epipelagic species (Leis et al. 2015). The morphological characteristics are deep, oval and laterally compressed body.

One specimen of *Masturus lanceolatus* was collected from trawl catches off Visakhapatnam east coast of India on 12 April 2016. Details of body measurements and meristic data were taken in fresh condition. Morphometric and meristic measurements were determined using standard methods given by (Tyler 1980; Jardas & Knezevic 1983). The species was identified based on the description given by (Huchins 2001; Matsuura 2002; Nair et al. 2013).

Phylum: Chordata

Subphylum: Vertebrate

Order: Tetraodontiformes

Family: Molidae

#### *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard, 1840) (Images 1–4)

Morphometric and meristic data follows (Table 1)

Description: Body deep and laterally compressed; vertically truncate with thick and leathery tough skin with small cuticles like denticles; mouth moderately

### AN OCCURRENCE OF THE RARE SHARPTAIL MOLA *MASTURUS LANCEOLATUS* (LIENARD, 1840) (TETRAODONTIFORMES: MOLIDAE), IN THE COASTAL WATERS OF VISAKHAPATNAM, INDIA

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small; beak like plates teeth in both jaws were fused into a single row; forming a parrot like beak. Eyes are moderate in size. Gill openings wide, oval in shape; situated slightly above and forward of the origin of pectoral fin base; dorsal and anal fins very high; pectoral fin slightly rounded; clavus projection slightly elongate and upper middle rays longest; head and body with small coarse like granular scales extending up to the base of the dorsal fin, anal, caudal fins; caudal fin gradually tapering and pointed. Gill openings were small and they were in front of pectoral fins; gas bladder absent. Body dark grey to black; dark grey on above, laterally silvery on abdomen and ventrally white in colour; vertical fins slightly blue with black.

Sunfish are mainly represented by the ancient genera *Mola* or *Orthogoriscus* in the family, common along the western European waters, and were first described by Rondelet & Salviani in 1554. Lienard (1840) first recorded the species *Orthogoriscus lanceolatus*, but later in 1885, Gill redescribed and established the genus

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Image 1. *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard, 1840), 1390mm, TL



Image 2. Tail part of *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard, 1840)



Image 3. Gill rakers of *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard, 1840)



Image 4. Data taking at fishing harbour

*Masturus*. Though this species was initially described from Indian waters, where there have been reports by Kulkarni (1953), Devaraj et al. (1976), Arumugam et al. (1994), Badrudeen (1995), Senthilkumar (2001), and Das et al. (2012) from Parangipettai coast, *M. lanceolatus* is considered rare on the Indian coast (Nair et al. 2013). *M. lanceolatus* is not a targeted catch in coastal waters off Visakhapatnam. There are no previously published records of this species on the Andhra coast and this is the first record.

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**Table 1. Morphometric and meristic measurements of *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard, 1840) from Visakhapatnam coast.**

<i>M. lanceolatus</i> (Lienard, 1840) n =1	Visakhapatnam coastal waters (2016)	Nair et al. (2012) from cochin waters	Das et al. 2012 (Tamil Nadu coast)
Total length	1390	1705	1270
Standard length	1060	1205	900
Snout length	150	220	145
Head length	420	-	275
Preorbital length	120	-	
Eye diameter vertical	60	-	50
Eye diameter horizontal	46	-	40
Eye ball diameter	50	70	20
Inter orbital distance	194	-	182
Snout to insertion of dorsal fin	820	-	700
Snout to insertion of anal fin	620	-	570
Snout to anus	580	-	540
Snout to insertion of pectoral fin	360	-	290
Body depth	570	890	-
Body width	270	-	-
Upper jaw length	36	-	-
Lower jaw length	34	-	-
Length of gill opening	56	-	43
Dorsal fin base	360	-	220
Dorsal fin height	540	570	420
Anal fin height	450	480	400
Anal fin base	220	-	200
Pectoral fin base	100	-	110
Pectoral fin length	150	-	130
Dorsal	18	-	-
Anal	18	-	-

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