

## FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)

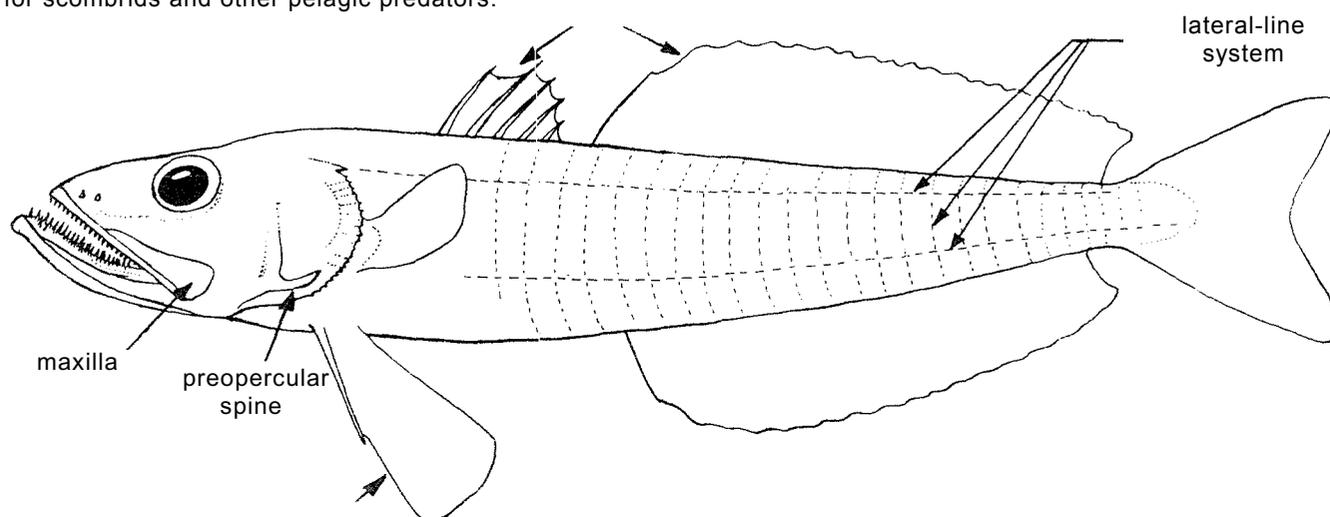
## CHAMPSODONTIDAE

## Gapers

Small fishes with elongate, slightly compressed bodies covered with very small, rough scales (resembling shark denticles). Mouth very large; the maxilla exposed; jaws with outer bands of cardiform teeth and an inner band of much larger, depressible, needle-like teeth; roof of mouth with 2 patches of teeth on vomer, none on palatines; a long, dagger-like spine at angle of preopercle. Two dorsal fins, the first with 4 or 5 weak spines and the second with 19 to 21 segmented soft rays; anal fin similar to soft dorsal, with 18 or 19 segmented soft rays; pectoral fins small, with 12 or 13 rays; pelvic fins larger than pectorals, with 1 spine and 5 soft rays, inserted well in front of pectoral fins. Two indistinct lateral lines with transverse branches.

Colour: body brownish dorsally; lateral and ventral parts silver, with dark bars or spots in some

Gapers are small mesopelagic fishes (less than 20 cm in total length) that inhabit fairly deep waters of the Indo-Pacific region from Africa and the Red Sea to Hawaii. They sometimes occur in great shoals, evidently rising to the surface at night, and are quite commonly cast ashore during storms. None of the species is fished commercially, but they are often taken along with commercial species; they may also be important prey species for scombrids and other pelagic predators.



## SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

The combination of characters such as an elongate body with minute, rough two separate dorsal fins, scales, pelvic fins inserted before the bases of pectorals, and the long, dagger-like spine, makes this family preopercular difficult to mistake.

## LIST OF NOMINAL SPECIES REPORTED IN THE AREA:

- Champsodon capensis Regan, 1908
- Champsodon guentheri Regan, 1908
- Champsodon microphthalmus Regan, 1908
- Champsodon omanensis Regan, 1908
- Champsodon sechellensis Regan, 1908

CHAN

1983

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

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CHANIDAE

Milkfishes

A single species in the area; see species sheet for:

Chanos chanos (Forsskål, 1775)      CHAN Chan

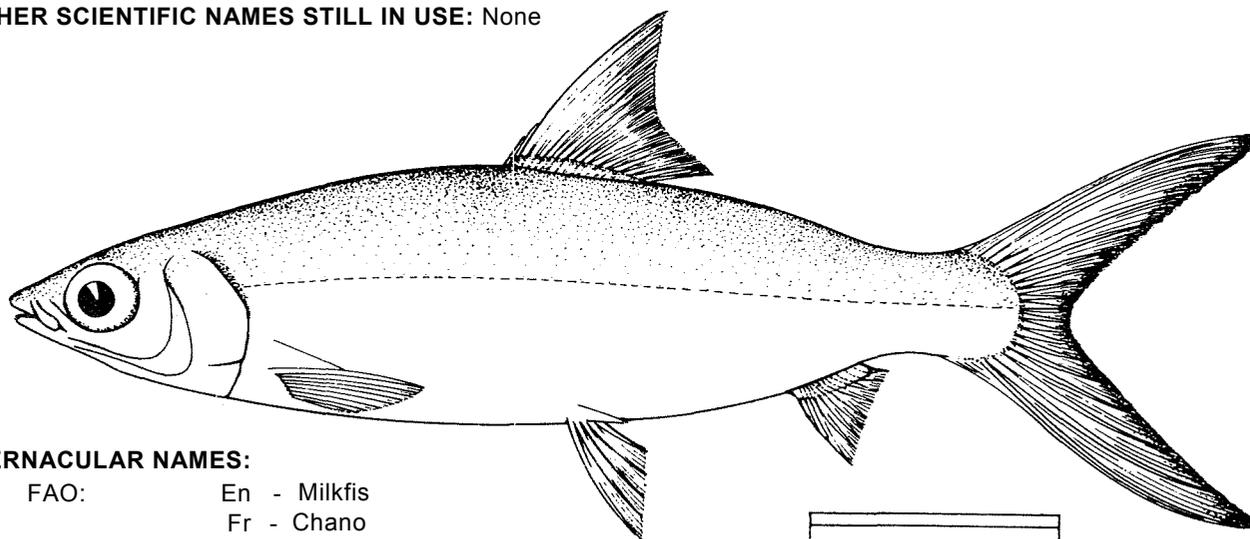
FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: CHANIDAE

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)

Chanos chanos (Forsskål, 1775)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

- FAO: En - Milkfis
- Fr - Chano
- Sp - Chan

NATIONAL:

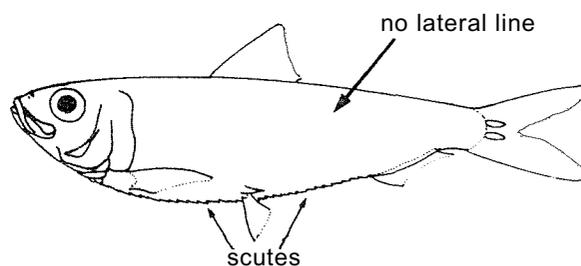
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body elongate, moderately compressed, with no scutes along belly. Mouth small, without teeth, lower jaw with a small tubercle at tip, fitting into a notch of upper jaw; no gularplate between arms of lower jaw; branchiostegal rays only 4. Dorsal fin at about midpoint of body; anal fin short and far behind dorsal fin base. Scales small, lateral line present.

Colour: back olive green, flanks silver. Dorsal, anal and caudal fins with dark margins.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Species of Clupeidae: size much smaller; scutes usually present along belly, no lateral line and usually 6 or 7 branchiostegal rays (only 4 in C. chanos).

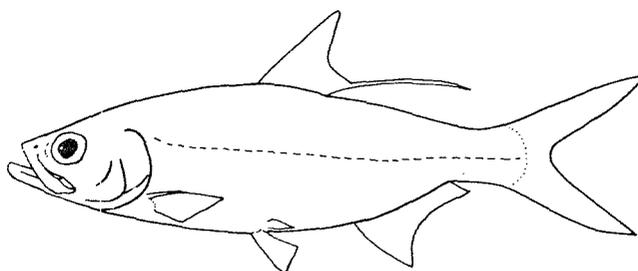


Clupeidae

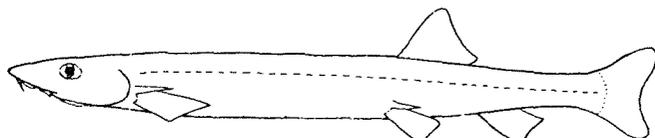
Megalops cyprinoides: scales large, 30 to 40 in lateral line; last dorsal fin ray filamentous; a bony gularplate present between arms of lower jaw.

Gonorhynchus gonorhynchus: dorsal fin set far back on body, lower part of body pink, caudal fin lobes much shorter; a barbel present under snout; mouth inferior.

Elops machnata: mouth much larger; maxilla reaching back beyond eye; a bony gularplate present between arms of lower jaw.



Megalops cyprinoides



Gonorhynchus gonorhynchus

**SIZE:**

Maximum: 180 cm; common to 100

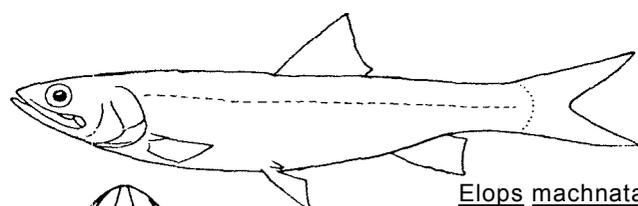
**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:**

Throughout whole area. Elsewhere, eastward through Indonesia to Samoa and beyond.

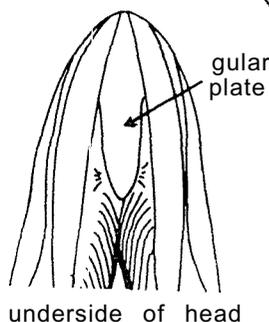
A coastal pelagic species, entering estuaries, rivers and lakes.

Feeds on bottom invertebrates.

For further details, see FAO Species Synopsis N° FB/54 (1960).



Elops machnata



underside of head

**PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:**

Shallow waters throughout its range; also largely cultured in tanks and ponds (the larvae being collected from the shore for this purpose).

**CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:**

Separate statistics are not reported for this species within the area.

Caught mainly with scoop nets, dragnets, setnets and traps.

Marketed fresh, smoked, canned or frozen.

