

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

MENIDAE

Moonfishes

A single species occurring in the area:

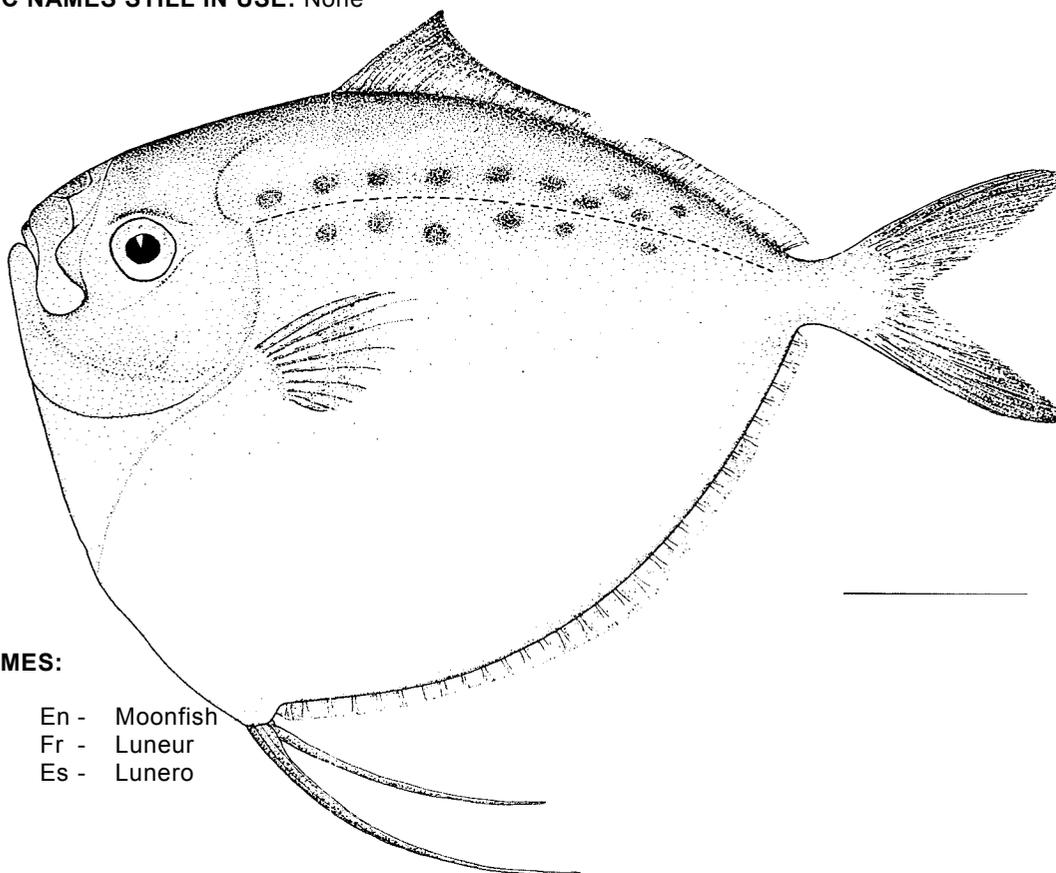
see species sheet for Mene maculata Bloch & Schneider, 1801) MEN Men 1

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: MENIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Mene maculata (Bloch & Schneider, 1801)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO: En - Moonfish
 Fr - Luneur
 Es - Lunero

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body extremely compressed, discoid, its depth contained 1.3 to 1.5 times in length (from tip of snout to base of caudal fin). Upper jaw protrusile; bands of villiform teeth in jaws, none on vomer or palatines. Gillrakers well developed, 6 upper and 23 lower on first arch. Dorsal fin long and low, the anterior rays slightly elevated; total number of rays 43 to 46, the first 3 to 10 not branched, spine-like in the young; anal fin very long and low, the rays very short and overgrown with skin in adults, so that only their widely branched tips are visible; first two rays of pelvic fins fused and greatly prolonged in adults; pectoral fins shorter than head, with 15 rays; caudal fin forked. Lateral line ending below rear end of dorsal fin base; scales minute, deciduous (body apparently scaleless).

Colour: dark blue dorsally and silvery white! below; several small round black spots on dorsal part of body.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

All other species with which Mene might be confused (some Carangidae, Leiognathidae, Monodactylidae, Ehippididae and Scatophagidae) have distinct scale, on the body or distinct spines in the dorsal and anal fins, or the anal fin rays are quite distinct.

SIZE:

Maximum: 24 cm; common to 18 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Found along continental coasts and around islands throughout the area. Elsewhere, in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Western Central Pacific.

Inhabits deeper coastal waters, especially around coral reefs. Sometimes enters estuaries. A solitary fish, living near the bottom.

Feeds on small invertebrates.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

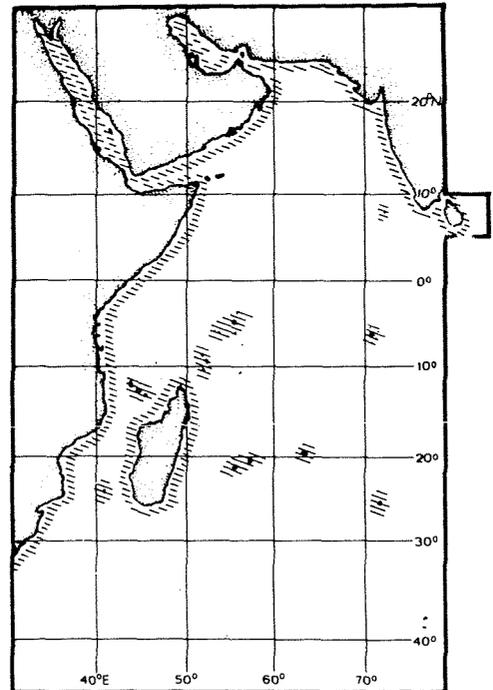
Taken incidentally throughout its range.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Taken mainly with trawls and various types of artisanal gear, especially beach seines and traps.

Marketed fresh or dried; although it has little flesh, its of excellent quality.



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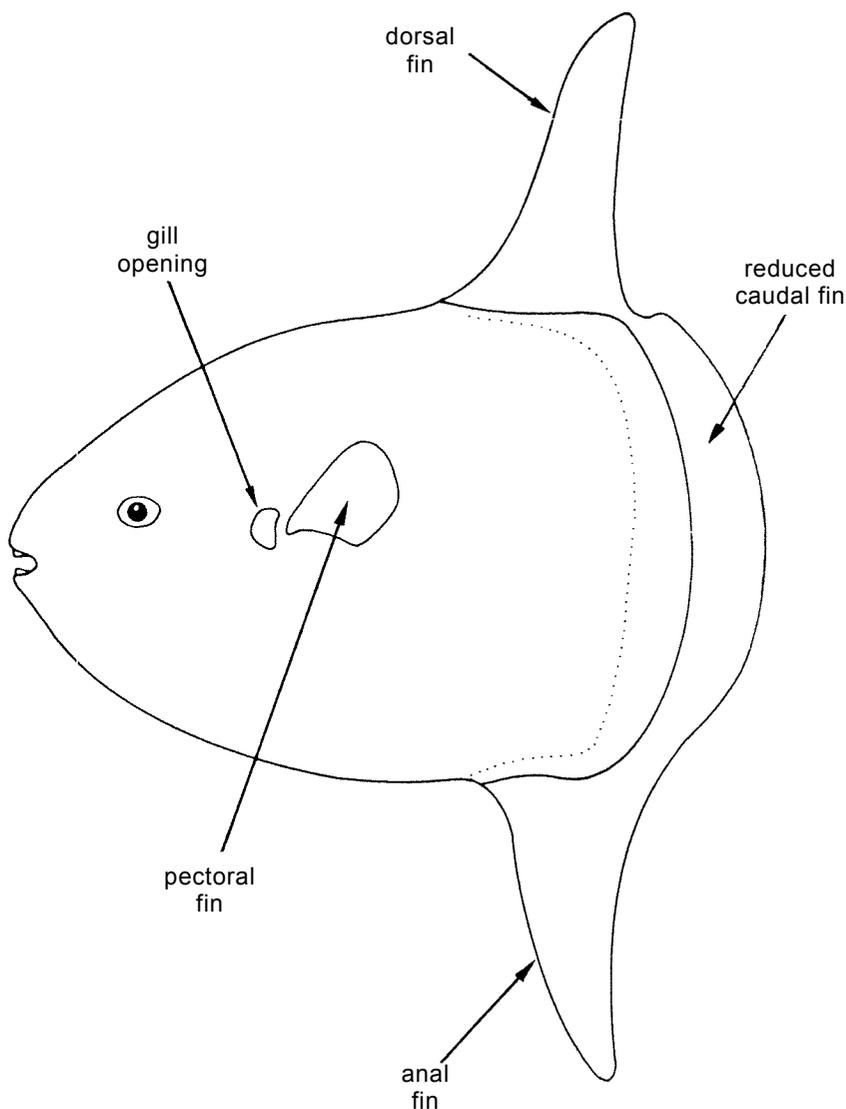
MOLIDAE

Molas, ocean sunfishes, headfishes

Body short and deep or oblong, markedly compressed, truncate and without caudal peduncle and normal caudal fin. Eyes small; mouth terminal, small; teeth united and beak-like in each jaw without a median suture; no palatine teeth; gill openings small, pore-like, located in front of pectoral fin bases. Dorsal and anal fins of similar shape, generally triangular, dorsal located above anal, the posterior portions of each more or less continuous with the greatly abbreviated caudal fin; both fins without spines and of 15 to 19 rays; pectoral fins small, located midside, with or without a shallow concavity behind, into which the fin may fit; pelvic fins absent; caudal fin reduced to a leathery fold with a scalloped trailing margin, immediately posterior to the bases of dorsal and anal fins. Skin of body leathery and thick, scales small, but basal plates in contact, and close-fitting, sometimes hexagonal in shape.

Colour: grey to dark grey on back, grey brown or brownish green on sides, with silvery reflections and dusky below, sides sometimes with small light spots.

Large fishes; some species reaching 3 m or more in length and up to 1300 kg in weight; one species only to 75 cm. Molas are pelagic fishes of warm and temperate seas. Sometimes seen swimming lazily, or idling at the surface, often partially on their side (large ones occasionally struck by vessels). They are occasionally thrown up on beaches by storms. Food consists of jelly fishes, and medusae, algae, brittle stars, larval eels and at times larger fishes. Usually heavily parasitized. Not generally used as food since flesh usually considered tough and unpalatable but sometimes treated as a delicacy. Only three species known throughout the world.

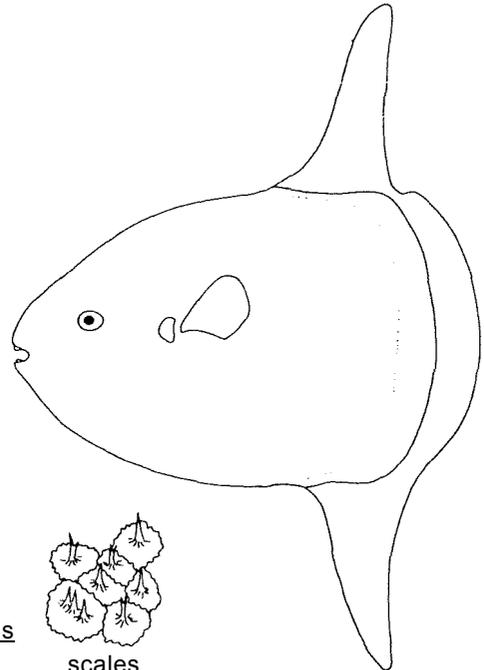


SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

The peculiar truncated shape, absence of a caudal peduncle and a normal caudal fin, together with the high dorsal and anal fins located far posteriorly on body readily distinguish the molas from all other fish families.

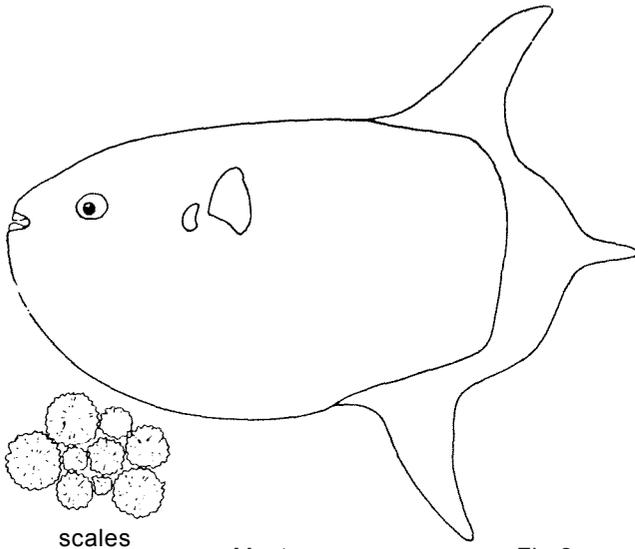
KEY TO GENERA AND SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

- 1a. Body depth into body length 1 to 1 ½ times; lips normal; body with small, round scales; pectoral fins small, rounded, not fitting into shallow grooves; large fishes, 1 m or more in length (Figs 1,2)
- 2a. Body depth usually equal to body length; caudal fin without posterior extension or tip (Fig.1) Mola mola
- 2b. Body depth usually into body length 1½ times; caudal fin with central projection; i.e. posterior margin of caudal fin with a pronounced point (Fig.2) Masturus lanceolatus
- 1b. Body depth into body length 2 times or nearly so; lips funnel-like forming a vertical slit when closed; body with adjoining scales often hexagonal in shape; pectoral fin elongate, fitting into shallow concavity; smaller fishes, to 75 cm long (Fig.3) .. Ranzania laevis



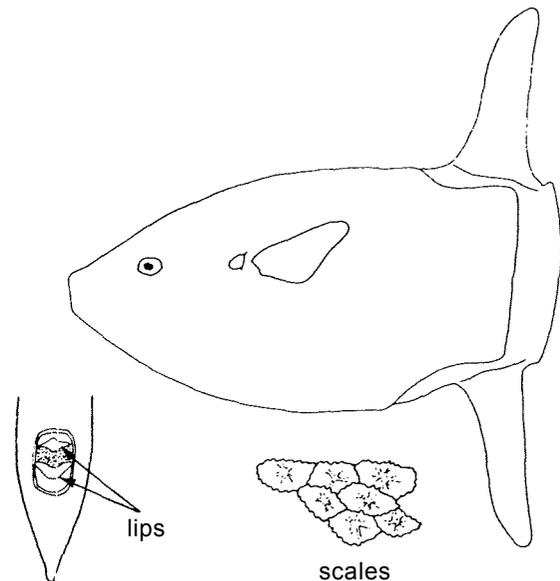
Mola mola

Fig.1



Masturus

Fig.2



anterior view of mouth

lips

scales

Ranzania laevis

Fig.3

LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Masturus lanceolatus (Liénard, 1841)

Mola mola (Linnaeus, 1758)

Ranzania laevis (Pennant, 1776)

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Illustrations from Tyler, 1980 (Osteology, Phylogeny and Higher Classification of the fishes of the Order Plectognathi; NOAA, NMFS)