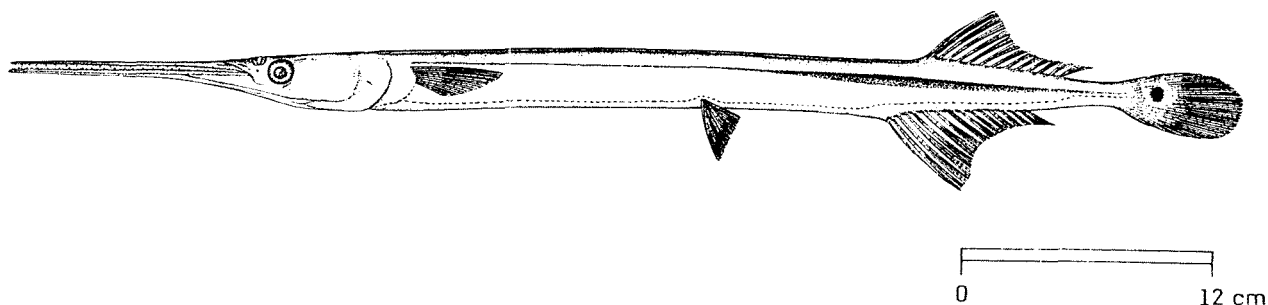


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY : BELONIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Strongylura strongylura (van Hasselt, 1823)OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: Tylosurus strongylura (van Hasselt, 1823)

VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Spottail needlefish
 Fr - Aiguillette ocellée
 Sp - Agujón ocelado

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body elongate, rounded in cross section. Upper and lower jaws greatly elongated and studded with sharp teeth; gillrakers absent. No spines in fins; anterior parts of dorsal and anal fins forming moderate lobes; dorsal fin rays 12 to 15; anal fin rays 15 to 18; pectoral fins not falcate; pectoral fin rays 10 to 12, usually 11. Caudal peduncle without lateral keels; caudal fin rounded or truncate, not emarginate or forked. Predorsal scales (in front of dorsal fin) few and relatively large, 100 to 130; bases of dorsal and anal fins covered with scales. Total number of vertebrae 59 to 65.

Colour: greenish above, silvery laterally, white ventrally; pectoral, pelvic, and anal fins light; dorsal and anal fins with some pigmentation along middle of the rays; caudal fin light with a prominent round black spot near its base; dorsal fin lobe and distal margin of caudal fin yellow in live adults, anterior margin of anal fin orange.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Stronoyiura leiura and S. incisa: more dorsal and anal fin rays. 11 to 20 and 21 to 25, respectively (12 to 15 and 15 to 18 in S. strongylura); no black spot at base of caudal fin; bases of dorsal and anal fins without scales (covered with scales in S. strongylura).

Platybelone argalus: caudal peduncle strongly depressed dorsoventrally and with well developed keels not depressed and no keels in Strongylura); gillrakers present (absent in Strongylura). No black spot at base of caudal fin, caudal fin forked.

Tylosurus and Ablennes species: many more dorsal fin rays, more than 20 (12 to 15 in S. strongylura) and caudal fin deeply forked, with lower lobe much longer than upper; also, a narrow black keel on caudal peduncle in Tylosurus species; body greatly compressed laterally and a dark posterior lobe to dorsal fin and dark bars on sides in Ablennes hians. No black spot at base of caudal fin.

SIZE :

Maximum: 40 cm standard length (without caudal fin) and 26 cm body length (without head and caudal fin); common to 22 cm standard length.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Within Fishing Area 51, extending from the "Gulf" along the coasts of Pakistan and India to Sri Lanka. Also found in the Eastern Indian Ocean and the Western Central Pacific, from the east coast of India east to southern China, the Philippine islands, and northern Australia. There is one museum specimen labelled Zanzibar but this record needs confirmation.

Inhabits coastal areas and mangrove-lined lagoons, where it is rather common (especially small specimens) and also enters freshwater.

Carnivorous, feeding mainly on small fishes, especially clupeoids.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

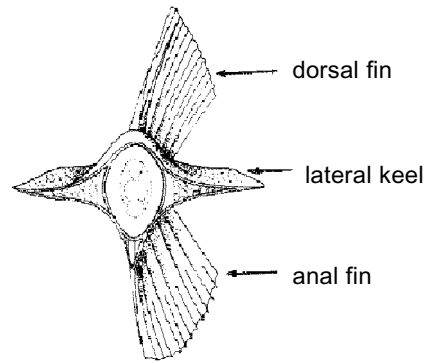
Fairly good catches are obtained from the coast of Kerala, southwest India.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

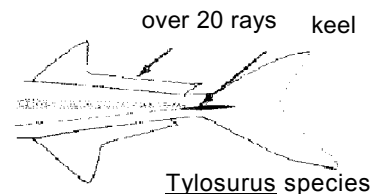
Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught by casting or trolling surface or near-surface lures; also with seines, often using lights and with castnets in mangrove-lined lagoons.

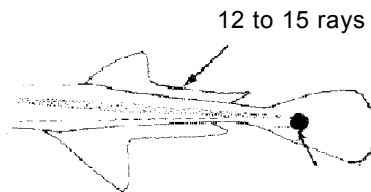
Marketed fresh



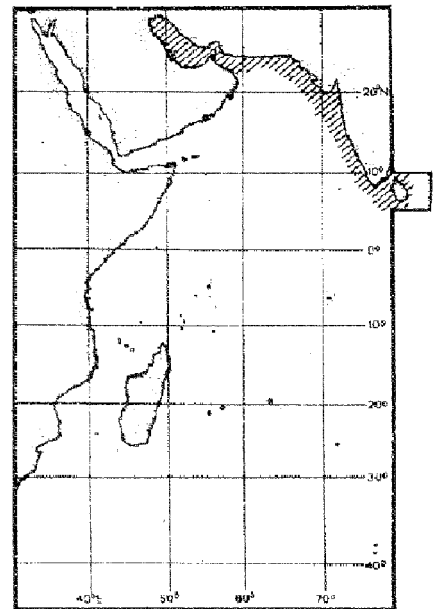
cross section through caudal peduncle Platybelone argalus



Tylosurus species



S. strongylura

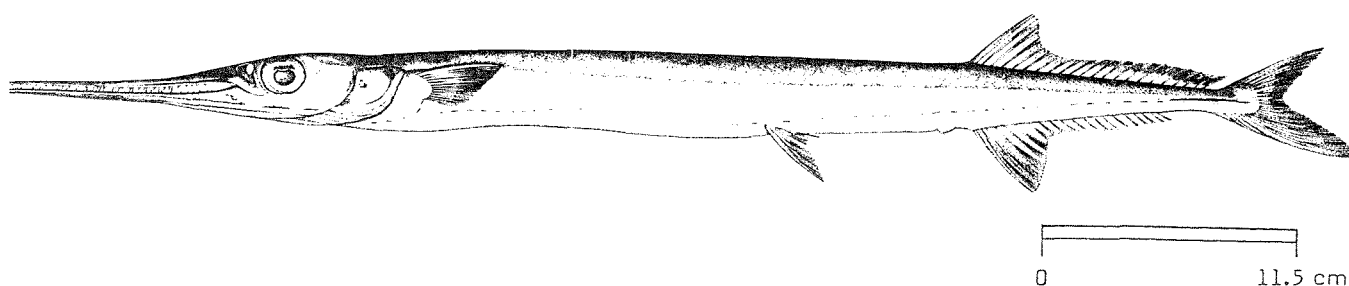


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: BELONIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Tylosurus acus melanotus (Bleeker, 1850)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Agujon needlefish
 Fr - Aiguille voyeuse
 Sp - Marao ojón (= Aguja imperial)

NATIONAL :

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER:

Body elongate, rounded in cross section. Upper and lower jaws greatly elongated and studded with sharp teeth; a conspicuous appendage sometimes present at tip of lower jaw; gillrakers absent. No spines in fins; anterior part of dorsal fin with a low lobe, contained 10.5 to 13.3 times in body length; dorsal fin rays numerous, 24 to 27; anal fin lobe low, contained 9.7 to 11.7 times in body length; anal fin rays numerous, 22 to 24, usually 23; pectoral and pelvic fins relatively short, 8 to 12.4 and 10 to 14.1 times in body length, respectively; pectoral fin rays 13 or 14; a small black lateral keel on caudal peduncle; caudal fin deeply forked, lower lobe much longer than upper. Predorsal scales (in front of dorsal fin) very numerous and tiny, 270 to 340. Left gonad absent or greatly reduced in both sexes. Total number of vertebrae 90 to 95.

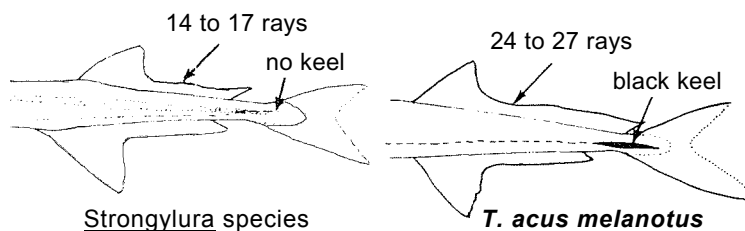
Colour: dark bluish above, silvery white below. Juveniles have an elevated black lobe in the posterior part of the dorsal fin which is lost with growth.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Tylosurus choram and T. crocodilus: much heavier-set species with relatively longer fins; dorsal and anal-fin lobes relatively high, contained 5.4 to 10.6 and 5.5 to 8.0 times in body length, respectively (10.5 to 13.3 and 9.7 to 11.7 times in T. a. melanotus); pectoral and pelvic fins relatively long, contained 6.6 to 8.3 and 7.3 to 10.6 times in body length respectively (8.0 to 12.4 and 10.0 to 14.1 times in T. a. melanotus); fewer dorsal fin rays, usually 19 to 23 (24 to 27 in T. a. melanotus); fewer vertebrae, 75 to 86 (90 to 95 in T. a. melanotus).

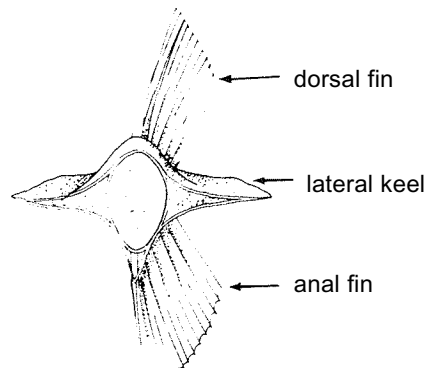
T. crocodilus

Strongylura species: fewer dorsal fin rays, 14 to 17 (24 to 27 in T. a. melanotus); no black lateral keel on caudal peduncle (keel present in T. a. melanotus); caudal fin emarginate or slightly forked with dorsal and ventral lobes about equal in length (deeply forked in T. a. melanotus with ventral lobe much longer); fewer vertebrae, 53 to 77 (90 to 95 in T. a. melanotus).



Platybelone argalus: caudal peduncle strongly depressed dorsoventrally with very prominent keels, not black (rounded in cross section with small black lateral keels in T. a. melanotus); gillrakers present (absent in T. a. melanotus); many fewer predorsal scales, 107 to 128 instead of 270 to 340; fewer vertebrae, 70 to 74 instead of 90 to 95.

Ablennes hians: body greatly compressed laterally (rounded in T. a. melanotus); 12 to 14 prominent vertical bars on body (no bars in adults of T. a. melanotus); more anal fin rays, 24 to 28 (22 to 24 in T. a. melanotus); a dark lobe present in posterior part of dorsal fin in adults and juveniles (lobe present only in juveniles of T. a. melanotus); no black lateral keel on caudal peduncle.



cross section through caudal peduncle

Platybelone argalus

SIZE:

Maximum: 90 cm total length and 60 cm body length (without head and caudal fin); common to 50 cm body length.



Ablennes hians

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Throughout the area, from South Africa, the Red Sea, the mouth of the "Gulf" and in Indian waters, including Sri Lanka. This subspecies is also found in the central and south Pacific and other subspecies are found worldwide in tropical and warm-temperate waters.

Pelagic, inhabiting more offshore waters than T. crocodilus, but also found in coastal waters.

Carnivorous, feeding mainly on small fishes.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

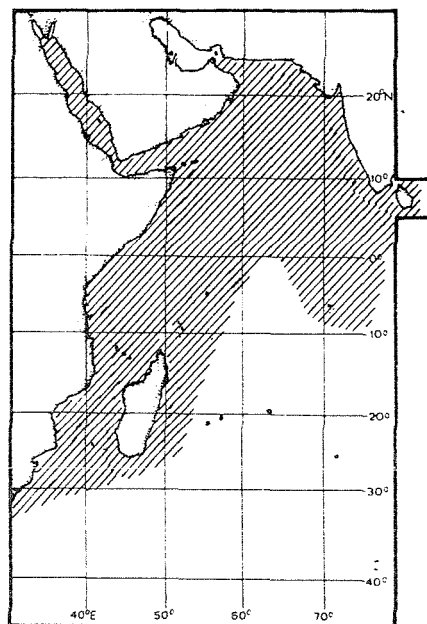
Inshore and offshore waters throughout its range; not uncommon in the commercial catches from near Mandapam in the Gulf of Manaar, southeast India.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

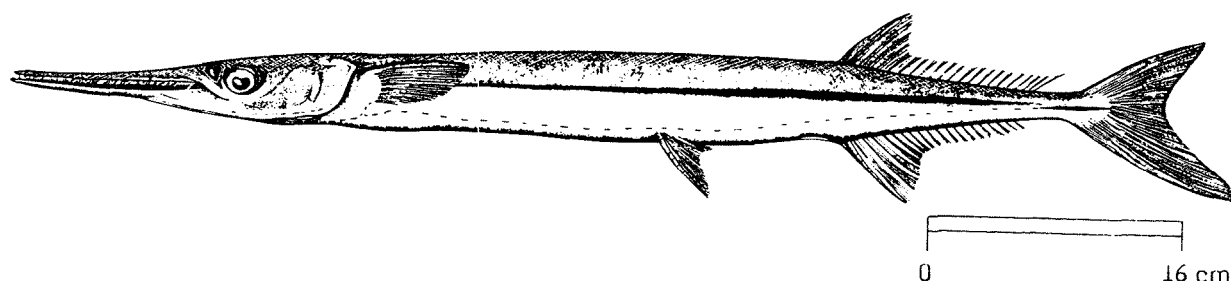
Caught by casting or trolling surface or near-surface lures; also with seines and gillnets, often using lights.

Marketed mostly fresh. The flesh is of good quality.



FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: BELONIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Tylosurus crocodilus crocodilus (Peron & LeSueur, 1821)OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: Tylosurus raphidoma (Ranzani, 1842)

VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Hound needlefish
 Fr - Aiguille crocodile
 Sp - Marao lisero

NATIONAL:

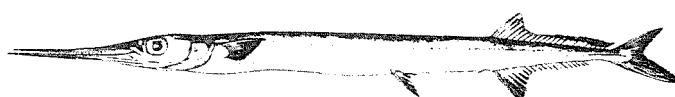
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body elongate, rounded in cross section. Upper and lower jaws greatly elongated and studded with sharp teeth; gillrakers absent. No spines in fins; anterior part of dorsal and anal fins with relatively high lobes, contained 5.4 to 10.6 and 5.5 to 8.0 times in body length, respectively; dorsal fin rays 21 to 24, usually 22 or 23; anal fin rays 19 to 22, usually 22 or 23; pectoral and pelvic fins long, contained 6.6 to 8.3 and 7.3 to 10.6 times in body length, respectively; pectoral fin rays 13 to 15, usually 14 or 15; a small black lateral keel on caudal peduncle; caudal fin deeply forked, lower lobe much longer than upper. Predorsal scales in front of dorsal fin numerous and tiny, 270 to 340. Both right and left gonads present, right longer than left. Total number of vertebrae 80 to 86.

Colour: dark bluish green above, silvery below. A dark blue stripe along sides. Juveniles have an elevated black lobe in the posterior part of the dorsal fin which is lost with growth. Scales and bones green.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

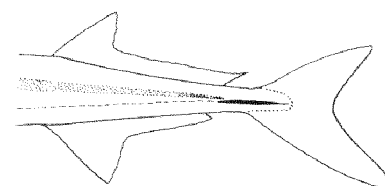
T. acus: a much more slender and graceful species with relatively shorter fins; dorsal and anal fin lobes relatively low, contained 10.5 to 13.3 and 9.7 to 11.7 times in body length (5.4 to 10.6 and 5.5 to 8.0 times in T. crocodilus); pectoral and pelvic fins relatively short, contained 8.0 to 12.4 and 10.0 to 14.1 times in body length (compared to 6.6 to 8.3 and 7.3 to 10.6 times in T. crocodilus); more dorsal fin rays, usually 25 (usually 22 or 23 in T. crocodilus); more vertebrae, 90 to 95 (80 to 86 in T. crocodilus).

T. acus

I. choram: teeth in both jaws more or less straight (teeth inclined anteriorly to some extent, particularly in small individuals of I. crocodilus); head and snout longer, 1.6 to 2 and 2.3 to 3.1 times in body length, respectively (2 to 2.6 and 3 to 4.3 times in I. crocodilus); averages fewer dorsal fin rays, 19 to 22, usually 21 or fewer (21 to 24 in I. crocodilus, usually 22 or more); fewer vertebrae, 75 to 80 (80 to 86 in I. crocodilus).



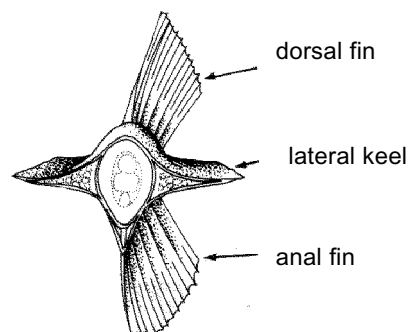
Strongylura species



T. crocodilus crocodilus

Strongylura species: fewer dorsal fin rays, 14 to 17 (21 to 24 in I. crocodilus); no black lateral keel on caudal peduncle (keel present in I. crocodilus); caudal fin emarginate or slightly forked with dorsal and ventral lobes about equal in length (deeply forked with the lower lobe much longer in I. crocodilus); fewer vertebrae, 53 to 77 (80 to 86 in I. crocodilus).

Platybelone argalus: caudal peduncle strongly depressed dorsoventrally with very prominent, but not black, lateral keels (caudal peduncle rounded in cross section with small black lateral keels in I. crocodilus); gillrakers present (absent in I. crocodilus); many fewer predorsal scales, 108 to 120 instead of 270 to 340; fewer vertebrae, 67 to 76 instead of 80 to 86.



cross section through caudal peduncle

Platybelone argalus

Ablennes hians: body greatly compressed laterally (rounded in I. crocodilus); 12 to 14 prominent vertical bars on body (no bars in I. crocodilus); more anal fin rays, 24 to 28 (19 to 22 in I. crocodilus); dark lobe present in posterior part of dorsal fin in adults and juveniles (dark lobe present only in juveniles of I. crocodilus); no black lateral keel on caudal peduncle (keel present in I. crocodilus).



Ablennes hians

SIZE :

Maximum: at least to 124 cm standard length, without caudal fin) and 82.5 cm body length (without beak and caudal fin), but unverified reports give up to 150 cm total length; common to 90 cm, standard length.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Throughout the area, from South Africa through the Red Sea and the "Gulf" to India and Sri Lanka. A worldwide species in tropical and warm-temperate waters.

A pelagic species inhabiting more coastal waters than I. acus, but also found in offshore waters.

Carnivorous, feeding mainly on small fishes. Large individuals may be dangerous when leaping out of the water.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

Inshore and offshore waters. Taken commercially in small quantities in India at Mangalore, Calicut, Karwar, Cochin, Vizhinjam on the west coast, and Mandapam in the Gulf of Manaar.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught by casting or trolling surface or near-surface lures; also with purse seines, driftnets and "kolachu vola".

Marketed mostly fresh.

