

First record of *Octopus aegina* Gray, 1849 from Maharashtra waters

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Octopus catch was earlier discarded, as it did not fetch any price, but in recent years, octopuses are also being exploited in commercial quantities and the major species that contribute to the fishery in Maharashtra are *Cistopus indicus*, *O. membranaceus* and *O. dollfusi*. Cephalopods form about 8.8% in trawl landings at New Ferry Wharf among which octopus contributed 4.9%.

A new entrant *Octopus aegina* Gray, 1849 (Fig. 1) was recorded in the octopus fishery from Mumbai. This species is commonly known as ‘Sand bird octopus’ and is distributed in Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, Red Sea and Japan to Mozambique. It is a benthic species commonly found in the continental shelf from 30-120 m depth. Together



Fig. 1. *Octopus aegina* Gray, 1849

with *C. indicus*, this is the most common species in Indo-Malayan markets. It is trawled on the

continental shelf or caught with traps and hook-and-line. It also supports subsistence fisheries in East Africa.

The mantle of *O. aegina* is round to oval and is covered with small tubercles or fine papillae arranged in a reticulate pattern. Eyes are prominent and the arms are moderately long with arm-I strikingly the shortest. The arm ratio is 4:2:3:1.

This species is observed throughout the year in Mumbai waters with relatively better catch during pre monsoon months. The species is more abundant in *Dol* net catches and very few specimens from

trawl catch. This species was observed in the *dol* catch at New Ferry Wharf, Sasoon Docks, Vasai, Arnala etc. The maximum mantle length reported for the species is 100 mm with a total length of 300 mm weighing 400 g. However, mantle length of *O. aegina* observed at Mumbai was smaller ranging from 18 mm to 40 mm with a corresponding weight ranging from 4.4 to 29.7 g.

Silas *et al.* (1985) had reported the occurrence of this species from Indian waters and Sivasubramaniam (1991) reported it from the Bay of Bengal. The present record is for the first time from Maharashtra waters.