



PRELIMINARY STUDY ON ELASMOBRANCH SPECIES ALONG THE COAST OF MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract

The Chondrichthyans, represented by sharks, sawfishes, skates, rays and chimaeras (Rat fishes) are an important group of demersal fishes. These are one of the most vulnerable groups due to their biological characteristics such as slow growth rate, delayed maturation, long reproduction cycles and low fecundity. They are widely distributed in the oceans but are most diverse in the tropical and subtropical Indo-Pacific Ocean. The commercial demand for elasmobranch has increased over the years which have led to overexploitation of these fish resources. The present work focuses on documentation and diversity of elasmobranchs and their juveniles from coastal regions of Maharashtra. To understand landing of juveniles and diversity of elasmobranchs we surveyed commercially important landing centres and jetties of Maharashtra. Total 34 species of elasmobranchs were recorded during the study from selected localities. 14 species of sharks, 15 species of rays and 5 species of wedge and guitarfishes were recorded from commercially important landing centers of Maharashtra. The landing surveys showed a high no of juveniles of shark species like *Carcharhinus limbatus*, *Carcharhinus sorrah*, *Sphyrna lewini*, *Scoliodon laticaudus* and rays like *Brevitrygon imbricata*, *Himantura gerradi* which aggregate in nearshore waters for feeding, mating and breeding. Sustainable fishing practices can be practiced, which would not allow the juveniles to get caught in the fishing net as bycatch. Active participation of community can bring change in conservation and protection of some vulnerable species of Elasmobranchs.

Keywords: Elasmobranchs, juveniles, diversity, conservation
