

**Abnormality in the Spiny Eel *Macrognathus*
aculeatus (Pisces Mastacembelidae)**

Mastacembelid fishes are well known for their food value. These fishes are represented by two genera, *Macrognathus* and *Mastacembelus*. Sufi¹ revised the oriental species of the family; he recognised 15 species of *Mastacembelus* and one species of *Macrognathus*. The genus *Macrognathus* is separated from the former by the presence of a long series of toothed bony plates on the undersurface of the fleshy projecting snout. Willey² expressed doubt about this separation of *Rhynchobdella* (= *Macrognathus*) from *Mastacembelus* while

having a caudal fin confluent with dorsal and anal. The present specimen of *Macrognathus aculeatus* differs from normal specimens in having a caudal fin confluent with dorsal as well as anal fins. The only other abnormal specimen of this species reported to be having a caudal fin adnate to anal is the paratype of *Mastacembelus paucispinis*, Acad. Nat. Sci. Philad., No. 68518 (= *Macrognathus aculeatus*).¹

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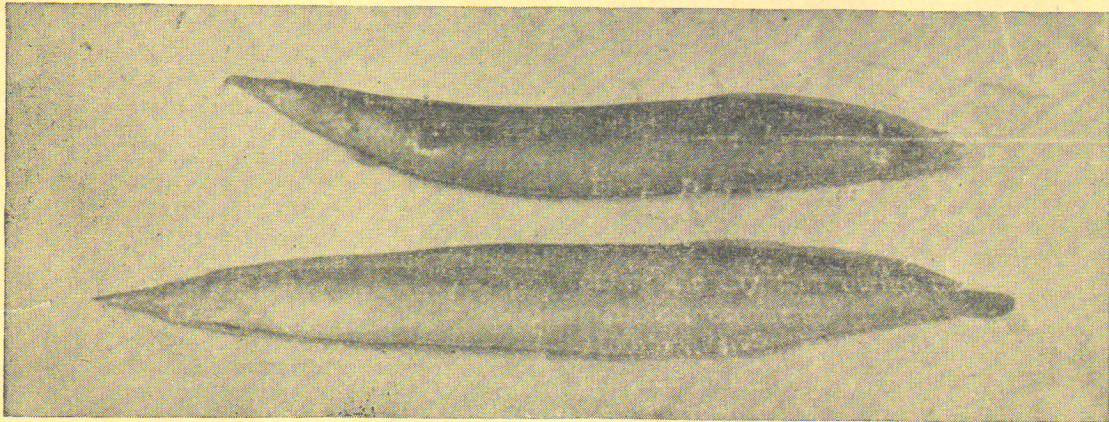


Fig. 1. Photograph showing the abnormal specimen of *Macrognathus aculeatus* (above); normal specimen (below).

subsequent workers treated them separately. The most common species occurring in this area are, *Macrognathus aculeatus*, *Mastacembelus armatus* and *M. pancalus*. During the course of investigations on freshwater fishes an abnormal specimen of *Macrognathus aculeatus*, 103 mm S.L. has been collected from Bhimavaram (Fig. 1).

Macrognathus aculeatus and *Mastacembelus pancalus* possess a caudal fin which is not adnate either to dorsal or anal fin, while *Mastacembelus armatus* is characterised by

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¹ S. M. K. Sufi, Division of the Oriental fishes of the family Mastacembelidae, *Bull. Raffles Mus. Singapore*, 27, 93-146, pl. 13-26, 1956.

² A. Willey, *Rhynchobdella aculeata* in Ceylon, *Nature*, 77, 345, 1906.