



RECORD OF *Oreochromis aureus* (STEINDACHNER, 1864) (TELEOSTEI: PERCIFORMES: CICHLIDAE) IN THE NATURAL WATERS OF TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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Of the many fish introduced globally for aquaculture, Tilapia can be considered as the most widely introduced species. The Mozambique Tilapia, *Oreochromis mossambicus* Peters, 1852, was the first species to be widely introduced for aquaculture. FAO Database on Introductions of Aquatic Species (DIAS; FAO, 2000-2009) states that *O. mossambicus* was first introduced to India during the year 1952 (Devadas & Chako, 1953) from Sri Lanka and Thailand for aquaculture with the idea of reservoir fisheries. *O. niloticus* Linnaeus, 1758, was introduced to India as late as 1990 from Thailand. *O. mossambicus* has found its way into the list of 100 of the World's worst Invasive Alien Species published by Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) (Lowe *et al.*, 2000). It has established itself in the wild which may be attributed to intentional release or escapes from fish farms.

O. mossambicus and *O. niloticus* have become

widely spread throughout Asia and occur in natural and quasi-natural waters. This has caused increased concern among conservationists and environmentalists (Pethiyagoda, 1994). A similar species, *Oreochromis aureus* (Steindachner, 1864), commonly called the Blue Tilapia which is a native of Africa and Middle East has also been introduced for commercial fisheries. Though there is no official record of blue tilapia being introduced into India, specimens of *O. aureus* (fig. 2A, B & C) were collected by the senior author from water bodies in and around Pallikaranai marsh in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. These fishes could have been brought in accidentally along with *O. mossambicus* fingerlings for aquaculture. The meristic details of ten specimens of *O. aureus* collected from Chennai are as follows: D.17/12-13; P.1/12-13; V.1/5; A.3/9-11; C.16; Lateral row of scales: 30-33; L.I. pored scales in upper and lower rows: 20-23/14-18 and gill rakers in the first arch: 21-23/5-7. The