

## REVIVING *HETEROPNEUSTES FOSSILIS*: ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND LIVELIHOODS

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*The Asian sting catfish, *Heteropneustes fossilis*, is a commercially important species found across various habitats in Southeast Asian countries. Locally known as Singhi, this species is highly nutritious and rich in protein, iron, and calcium. However, its population has declined by 20% in the last two decades. While existing research has focused on aspects such as reproductive biology and population structure, little attention has been given to establishing its population naturally in its habitat. This study presents a successful case of establishing *H. fossilis* in the wetlands of Eastern India. A total of 312 specimens were collected through seasonal sampling from June 2021 to May 2022, with sizes ranging from 7.94 cm to 28.36 cm in total length and 1.57g to 126.7g in weight respectively. The abundance of fish, particularly in June, contributed significantly to commercial catches in the wetlands of Khagaria district of Bihar. Notably, 90% of the captured fish by weight were mature brooders, indicating the reproductive capability of the species' during this period. A systematic approach to harvesting and post-harvest management was implemented in Khagaria, with focus on identifying priority breeding habitats and implementing in-situ natural management strategies in post-breeding. The study recommends policy guidelines for the capture-based fisheries, aquaculture, conservation, and management of *H. fossilis* amidst changing eco-climatic conditions, emphasizing specific management measures for sustainable fisheries and livelihood generation.*

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