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Molecular identification of gnomefish *Scombrops boops* and the related species *Scombrops gilberti*

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Gnomefish *Scombrops boops* and the related species *Scombrops gilberti* are commercially important fishes in Japan, but the total catch of the scombroid fishes has recently decreased sharply. Although the understanding of the habitat use of commercial fishes at their early life stages is fundamental for appropriate resource management, life history of these species remains unknown. To correctly identify these two species, we performed nucleotide sequencing on 16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) gene and the control region in mitochondrial DNA, resulting in difference in these nucleotide sequences between *S. boops* and *S. gilberti*. Subsequently, we developed polymerase chain reaction-restriction fragment length polymorphism (PCR-RFLP) analysis based on the 16S rRNA gene sequence using two enzymes, *Eco*NI and *Mva*I, and the method clearly discriminated between *S. boops* and *S. gilberti* identified by meristic characters such as number of pored lateral line scales and gill rakers. The PCR-RFLP analysis identified the majority of the *Scombrops* young caught in the coastal waters of the Izu and Miura Peninsulas as *S. boops*, suggesting that *S. gilberti* juveniles are rare in this area.