

## *Parascolopsis capitinis*, a new species of nemipterid fish from Sri Lanka

Barry C. Russell\*

### Abstract

*Parascolopsis capitinis* n. sp., is described from Sri Lanka. This species is distinguished from *P. eriomma*, *P. tosenis*, *P. quantasi*, *P. rufomaculatus*, *P. tanyactis*, *P. barenesi* and *P. inermis* by having 11-12 gill rakers on the first arch (vs. 17-19 for *P. eriomma* and 8-10 for the other six species respectively); from *P. townsendi* by having a smooth suborbital (vs. scaly); and from *P. tosenis*, *P. aspinosa*, *P. baranesi* and *P. boesemani* by the head scales reaching only to the posterior margin of the pupil (vs. almost up to or in front of anterior margin of eye respectively). It is also distinguished by its relatively large head (2.8-3.1 times in SL); its moderately long pelvic fins, which reach almost up to the vent; and by a black spot on the upper base of the pectoral fin.

Key words: Teleostei, Nemipteridae, *Parascolopsis* new species, Sri Lanka.

### Introduction

Of the nine species of *Parascolopsis* considered valid by Russell (1990), five (*P. aspinosa* Rao & Rao, 1980; *P. boesemani* Rao & Rao, 1981; *P. eriomma* (Jordan & Richardson, 1909); *P. inermis* (Schlegel, in Temminck & Schlegel, 1843); and *P. townsendi* Boulenger, 1901) have been recorded from the coastal waters of peninsular India and/or Sri Lanka.

In the course of field work undertaken in September 1991 during preparation of a field guide to the marine fishery resources of Sri Lanka for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (De Bruin et al., 1995), I collected several specimens of a new species of *Parascolopsis* from St John's Fish Market, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Additional specimens were found amongst material received from the United States Museum of natural History.

These species is described here as *Parascolopsis capitinis*.

### Materials and methods

Methods of counting and measuring specimens follows Russell & Gloerfelt-Tarp (1984). All specimen lengths are standard lengths (SL) unless otherwise indicated. All measurements are indicated in millimetres rounded to the nearest 0.1 mm. In the description, measurements and counts for the holotype are given first; those for the paratypes, where different from the holotype, are enclosed in parentheses.

\* Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, G.P.O. Box 4646, Darwin, NT0801, Australia.

The specimens are deposited in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin (NTM) and the National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C. (USNM).

*Parascolopsis capitinis* new species

Figure 1

**Holotype.** USNM 266885, 173.5 mm SL, Sri Lanka, Colombo Fish Market; captured off Trincomalee (8°34'N, 81°13'E), T. Iwamoto, 3 May 1970.

**Paratypes.** USNM 265221, 2 ex., 134.7, 182.0 mm SL, same data as holotype. NTM S.13159-005, 4 ex., 130.0-171.0 mm SL, Sri Lanka, St John's Fish Market, Colombo, B.C. Russell, 27-28 September 1991.

**Diagnosis**

*Parascolopsis capitinis* is distinguished from *P. eriomma*, *P. tosenis*, *P. quantasi*, *P. rufomaculatus*, *P. tanyactis*, *P. baranesi* and *P. inermis* by having 11-12 gill rakers on the first arch (vs. 17-19 for *P. eriomma* and 8-10 for the other five species respectively); from *P. townsendi* by having a smooth suborbital (vs. scaly); and from *P. tosenis*, *P. aspinosa*, *P. baranesi* and *P. boesemani* by the head scales reaching only to the posterior margin of the pupil (vs. almost up to or in front of anterior margin of eye respectively). It is also distinguished by its relatively large head (2.8-3.1 times in SL); its moderately long pelvic fins, which reach almost up to the vent; and by a black spot on the upper base of the pectoral fin.

**Description**

Dorsal-fin rays, X, 9; anal-fin rays III, 7; pectoral-fin rays 17 (16-17); lateral-line scales 35 (35-36); transverse scale rows 3+12 (2½+11 or 3+12); gill rakers 12 (11-12).

Body moderately deep, depth 2.9 (2.8-3.1) times in SL. Head 2.8 (2.6-2.8) times in SL. Head about equal to or a little longer than body depth: head length 1.0 (0.9-1.0) times in body depth. Snout short, rounded, 3.6 (4.1-4.7) times in head. Eye 3.1 (2.7-3.1) times in head, its diameter greater than snout length (0.9 (0.6-0.7) times in snout length. Interorbital width 1.5 (1.4-1.8) times in eye. Suborbital shallow, least depth 3.1 (3.2-4.8) times in eye. Dorsal-fin length 1.9 (1.9-2.0) times in SL; fourth or fifth dorsal spine usually longest, 1.9 (1.9-2.0) times length of first dorsal spine; second through fifth dorsal rays longest, 1.1 (1.0-1.1) times length of longest dorsal spine. Anal fin length 6.1 (5.9-6.4) in SL; first anal spine 1.7 (1.6-1.8) times in second; second anal spine 1.0 (0.9-1.0) times in third. Pectoral fins long, reaching up to or beyond level of vent, 1.3 (1.3-1.4) times in head. Pelvic fins moderately long, reaching to or just short of level of vent, 1.5 (1.5-1.6) times in head.

Mouth moderate, maxillary reaching to about level of anterior margin of pupil. Jaw teeth villiform, in narrow tapering bands in both jaws. Upper jaw with 4 pairs of slightly enlarged, recurved teeth anteriorly. Scales on top of head extending forward between eyes to about level of posterior margin of pupil. Snout and suborbital naked. Suborbital round, its posterior edge smooth or denticulate, with a small spine at upper corner. Preopercle with 5 transverse scale rows, its lower limb naked; posterior margin of preopercle finely denticulate. Dorsal fin emarginate; caudal fin slightly forked.

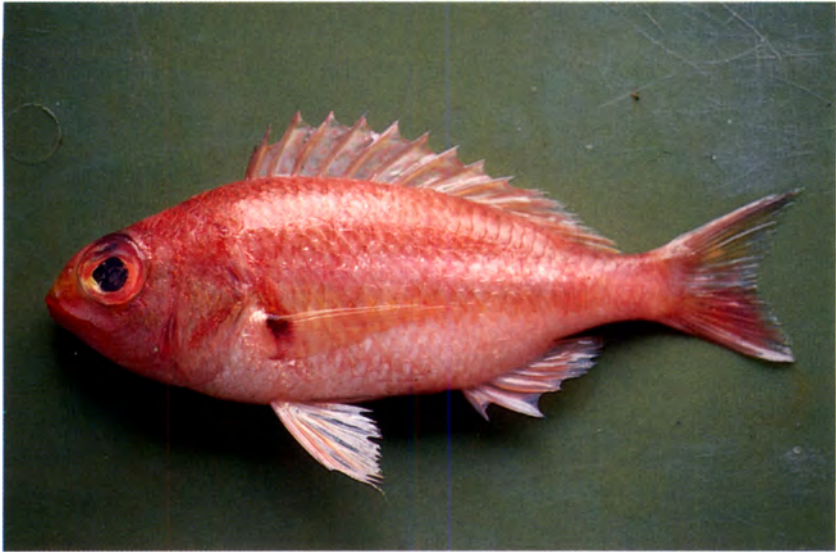


Figure 1. *Parascolopsis capitinis*, paratype, NTM S.13159-005, 171.0 mm SL.

**Colour.** When fresh, body rosy pink, paling on ventral surface. An indistinct, pale pink longitudinal stripe midlaterally from below origin of lateral line to base of caudal fin. Indistinct traces of a yellowish band on snout in front of eye. Preopercle and opercle with yellow reflections. Upper half of caudal fin pale dusky yellow, lower lobe rosy red. Dorsal, anal and pelvic fins pale pink; pectoral fins translucent yellowish; upper base of pectoral fin with diffuse black spot.

In alcohol pale brownish, the anterior head scales and pored supraorbital scales with dusky tracings; scales on back and upper part of sides with dusky submargins. Traces of a pale lateral band from below origin of lateral line to middle of caudal peduncle. Dorsal fin with faint dusky markings. Upper base of pectoral fin with a diffuse black spot.

### Etymology

The species name *capitinis* is a reference to the relatively large head of this species

### Discussion

*Parascolopsis capitinis* is similar in appearance to *P. eriomma*. The specimens from St John's Fish Market were collected together with *P. eriomma*, and it was not until they were examined closely that it was realised that they represented two distinct species. *Parascolopsis capitinis* differs from *P. eriomma* in having 11-12 gill rakers on the first arch (vs. 17-19); a larger head (head length 2.6-2.8 in SL, versus 3.0-3.3 in SL); pectoral fins reaching to or beyond the level of the vent (vs. to or just short of the level of the vent in *P. eriomma*); and colouration, notably in having the diffuse black spot at the upper base of the pectoral fins (absent in *P. eriomma*).

*Parascalopsis quantasi* Russell & Gloerfelt-Tarp, 1984, the only other *Parascalopsis* to have a dark spot at the base of the pectoral fin, is most easily distinguished from *P. capitinis* in having the pelvic fins reaching beyond the vent (vs. just up to or short of the vent in *P. capitinis*); the brownish body colour (vs. pink); and the spot at the base of the pectoral fin being large and prominent (vs. a diffuse spot restricted to the upper base of the fin).

#### Distribution

The USNM specimens of *Parascalopsis capitinis* collected from the Colombo fish market were caught off Trincomalee, on the north-east coast of Sri Lanka.

#### Acknowledgements

Field collecting in Sri Lanka was supported by FAO through the efforts of Walter Fischer and Kent Carpenter. I thank C. Amarasiri and P. Dayaratne, National Aquatic Resources Agency, Colombo; P. Hijmans, FAO, Colombo; and R. Pethiyagoda, Wildlife Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka, Colombo, for their assistance during my visit to Sri Lanka.

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