

**OCCURRENCE OF THE RED PIKE-CONGER,
CYNOPONTICUS CONICEPS (JORDAN AND GILBERT,
1881) (PISCES: MURAENESOCIDAE), IN THE GULF OF
CALIFORNIA**

GORGONIO RUIZ-CAMPOS

Facultad de Ciencias
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
Apdo. Postal 1653
Ensenada, Baja California, 22800, Mexico
U.S. mailing address: P.O. Box 189003-064
Coronado, California 92178

SALVADOR CONTRERAS-BALDERAS

Bioconservación, A.C.
Apdo. Postal 504
San Nicolás de los Garza
Nuevo Leon, 66450, Mexico

MARIA DE LOURDES LOZANO-VILANO

Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas
Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon
Apdo. Postal 425
San Nicolás de los Garza
Nuevo Leon, 66450, Mexico

The red pike-conger, *Cynoponticus coniceps*, also known as "morenocio bio-bio" or "culebra blanca," is a benthic, piscivorous fish that reaches 1 m in length and inhabits warm, shallow, coastal waters (10-100 m depth) with sand and mud bottoms (Jordan and Evermann 1896, Smith 1995).

On 26 January 1984, 2 specimens of the red pike-conger (Fig. 1) were captured with a commercial shrimp net near El Desemboque, between Santo Tomas and Cabo Tepoca, Gulf of California, Sonora, Mexico (30°34'N, 113°01'W). The specimens were taken at a depth of 33 m on a sandy bottom.

The previously known distribution of the red pike-conger was from Mazatlan, Sinaloa (type locality) and Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico, to the coast of Colombia (Jordan and Evermann 1896, Kumada 1937, Ramírez-Hernández 1976, Smith 1995). The specimens of red pike-conger from El Desemboque represent the northernmost record of the species and the 1st occurrence of the species in the upper Gulf of California. The range of this species is thus extended about 1,055 km farther north than previously reported.

The specimens were identified by the following combination of diagnostic characteristics (Jordan and Evermann 1896, Smith 1995): body robust, moderately elongate; tail compressed; mouth large, upper jaw extending well beyond the eye; anterior nostril short and tubular; posterior nostril situated at level of the eye; gill

10 II 12 13 14 15 10 17 10 19 20 21

1 10 11 12 13 14 19 16 11 18 19 20 21



A

4 5 6 7 9 **10** 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 1.8



Figure 1. (A) Specimen of red pike-conger (550 mm total length) collected in El Desemboque, Gulf of California, Mexico (26 January 1984). (B) Lateral view of the head and anterior trunk region of the same specimen.

cleft large, inferior, rather oblique; vomer with a median row of about 15 very large, strong teeth, which are much compressed; tip of the teeth angular and directed backwards and with a nick on the posterior edge; 1 or 2 of the anterior teeth only slightly tricuspidate; pectoral more than 1/2 head length.

The body measurements in millimeters of the 2 specimens are as follows: total length 550 and 553, head length 74.1 and 77.9, trunk length 150 and 151, caudal length 332 and 333, preorbital distance 17.3 and 18.8, interorbital distance 11.5 and 12.0, eye diameter 8.6 and 9.0, and upper jaw length 31.1 and 33.0.

The color of the specimens as preserved in alcohol is coppery brown, being darker on the dorsum. Dorsal and anal fins are edged with black; pectorals fins are black.

The specimens are deposited in the ichthyological collections of the Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon (UANL-13370) and Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC-0010).

Our record of the red pike-conger in the upper Gulf of California may represent a case of geographical disjunction similar to those reported for other conger-like eels (*Anguilliformes*) in the eastern Pacific region (Walker 1960, McCosker and Rosenblatt 1995).

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