

SAINT HELENA'S UNIQUE FISH FAUNA

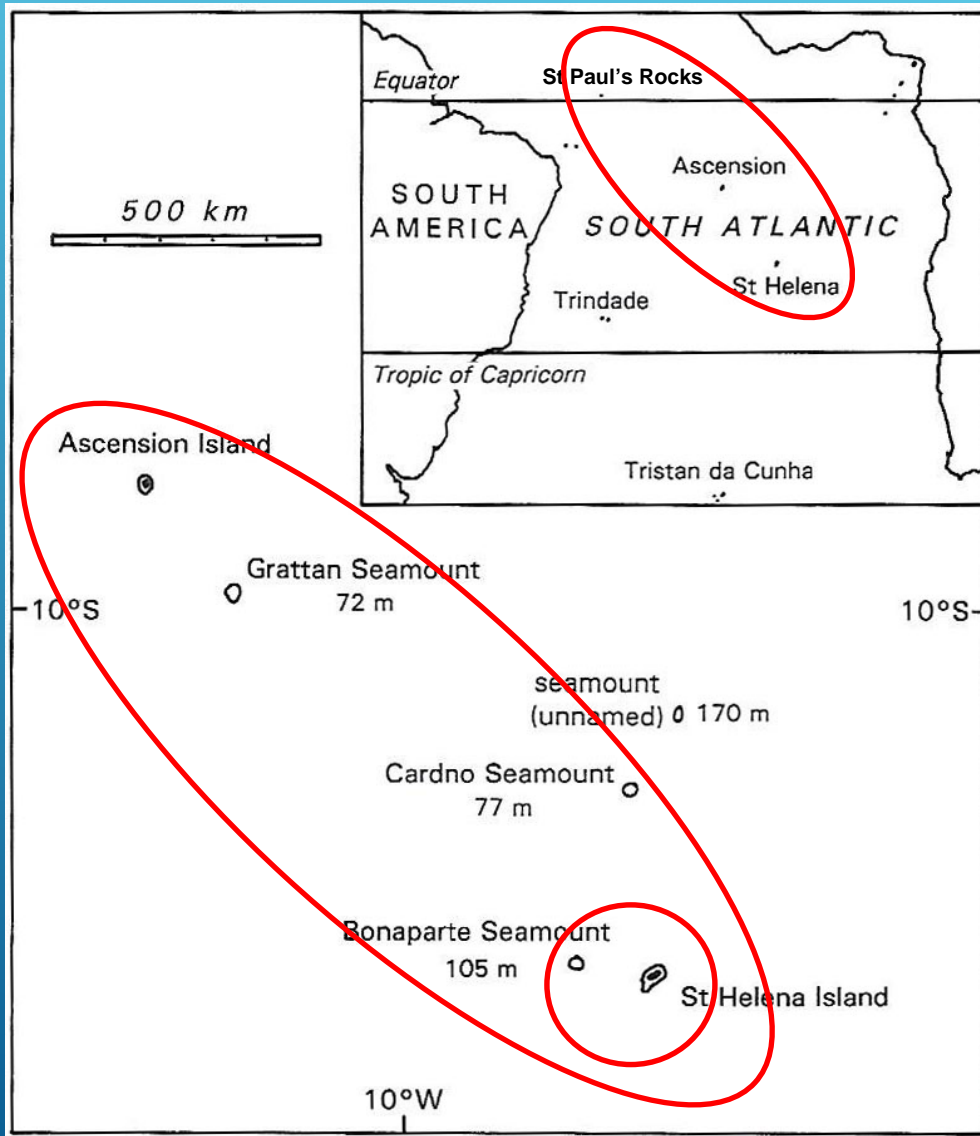
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Endemism

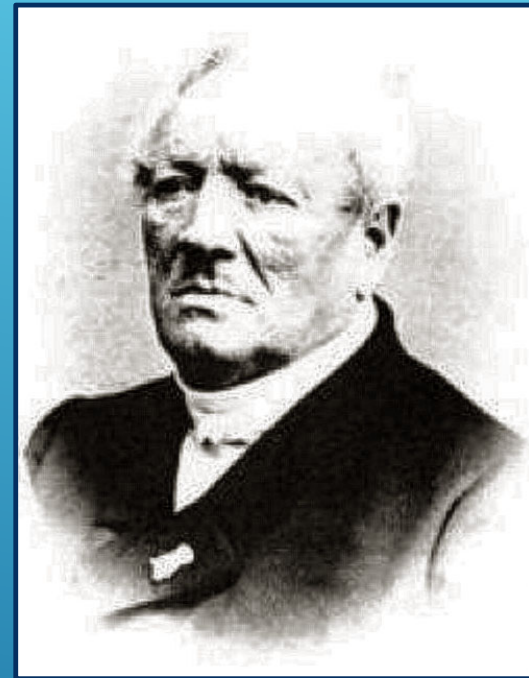
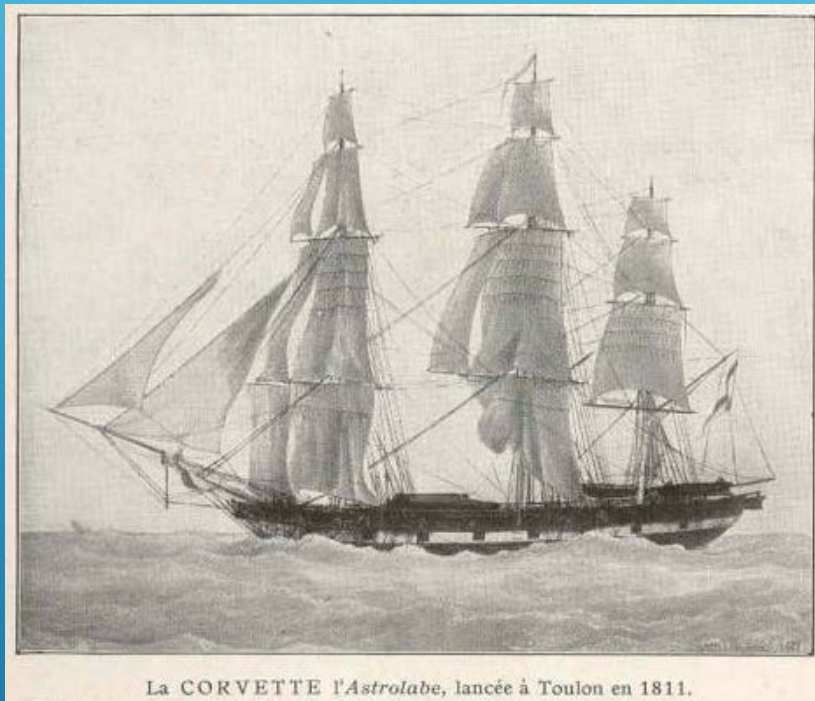


1. Saint Helena endemics

2. St Helena and Ascension Island endemics.

3. Tropical central Atlantic island endemics.

Great French naturalist voyages of the early 19th Century



La Coquille in 1825 (RPP Lesson and P Garnot). *L'Astrolabe* in 1829 (JRC Quoy and JP Gaimard).

Fishes described by Achille Valenciennes of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris

Red Mullett, Axillary Cardinalfish

Apogon axillaris Valenciennes, 1832



First found at Ascension. Known only from St Helena and Ascension.

Textile Blenny

Entomacrodus textilis (Valenciennes, 1836)



First found at Ascension. Known only from St Helena and Ascension.

Greenfish, St Helena Wrasse

Thalassoma sanctaehelenae (Valenciennes, 1839)

Primary phase



Secondary phase ♂



Juvenile

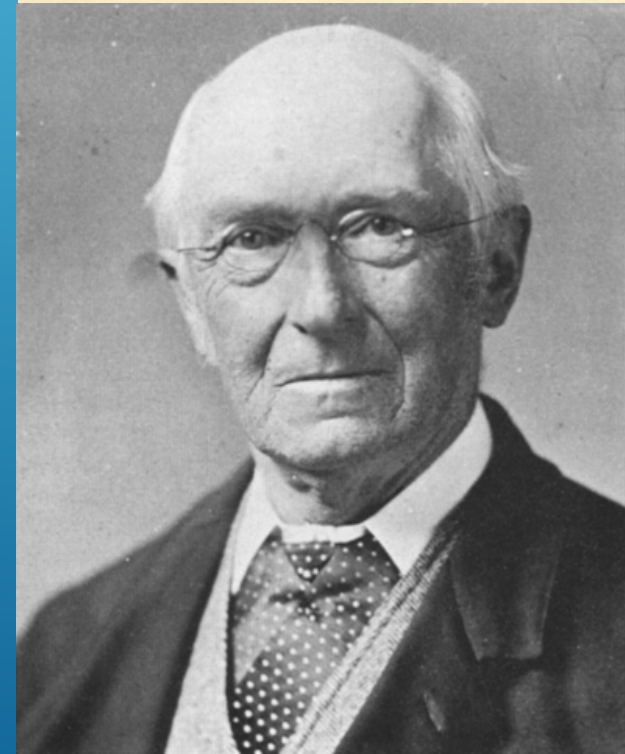
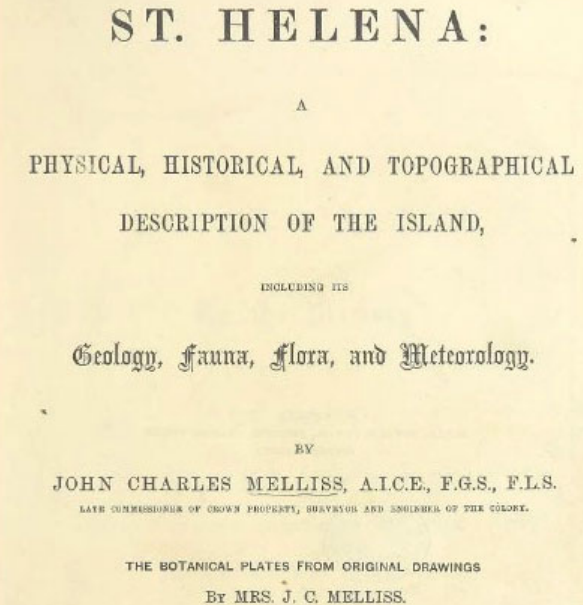


Until recently known **only** from St Helena.
Now co-exists with *T. ascensionis* on
Ascension.

John Charles Melliss, Government Secretary 1865-1872

In 1867-1869 sent 137 fish specimens belonging to 65 species (20 new to science) to Albert Günther (below right) at the British Museum.

Günther described 9 of the new species including several endemics. His work formed the basis for the excellent fish section in Melliss's book published in 1875.



Rockfish, Strigate Parrotfish

Sparisoma strigatum (Günther, 1862)



Primary phase ♀ (left) and secondary ♂ "Blue Dad" phase (right). Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands.

Deepwater Jack, St Helena Deepwater Scorpionfish
Pontinus nigropunctatus(Günther, 1868)



Known only from St Helena in 1987. Now also recorded from Ascension Island, St Paul's Rocks, Bonaparte Seamount and the Grattan Bank.

Deepwater Greenfish, St Helena Seaperch

Holanthias fronticinctus (Günther, 1868)



"Hen" ♀

Known only from St Helena in 1987. Now also recorded from Ascension Island, Bonaparte Seamount and the Grattan Bank.



"Cock" ♂

Cunningfish, St Helena Butterflyfish

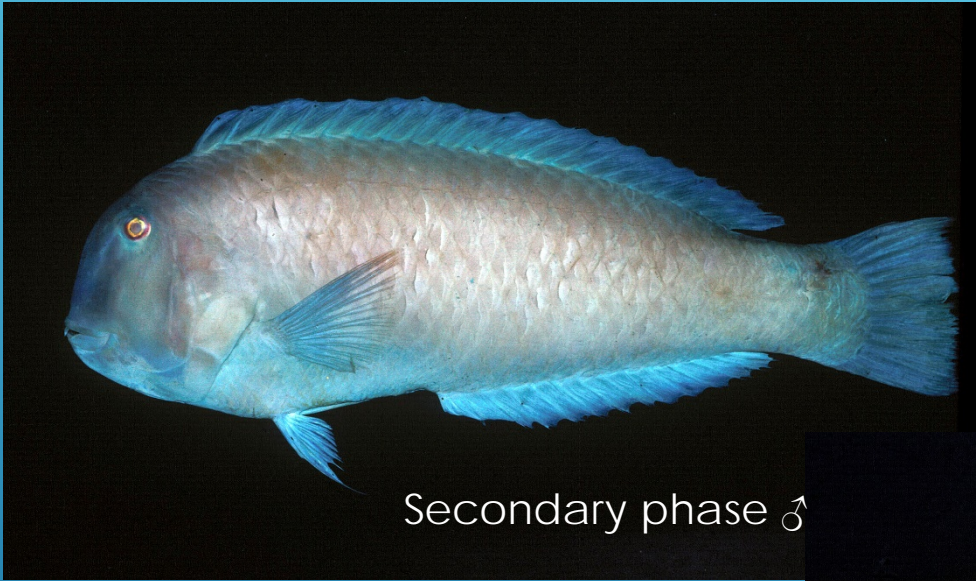
Chaetodon sanctaehelenae Günther, 1868



Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands. Strays recently found in Canaries and Liberia.

Sand Greenfish, Yellow Razorfish

Xyrichtys sanctaehelenae (Günther, 1868)



Secondary phase ♂

Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands. One record from Rolas Island off São Tomé Island in 2006.

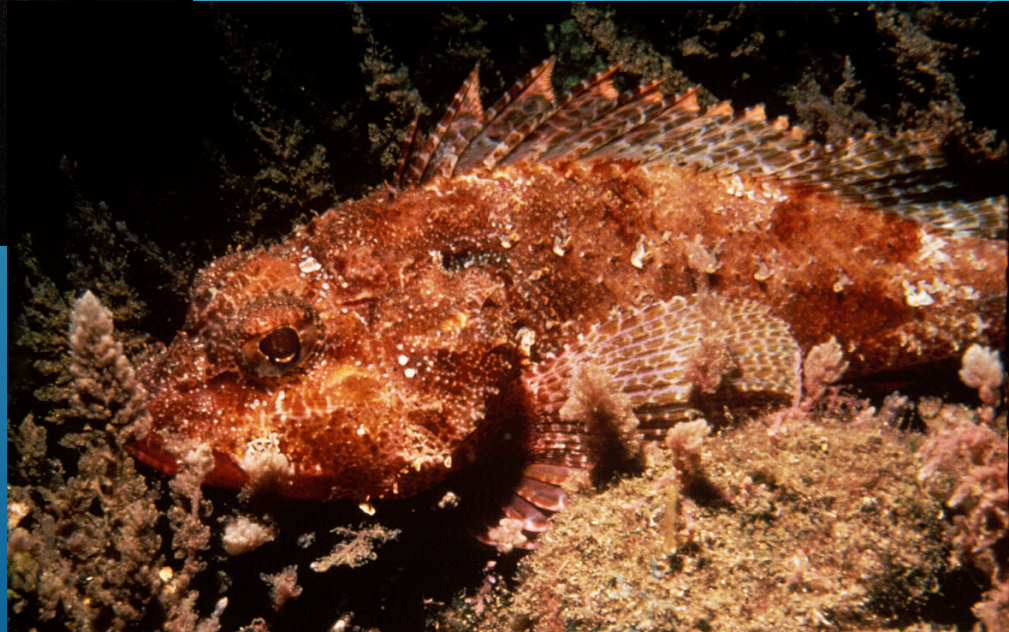


Primary phase

Deepwater Gurnard, Melliss's Scorpionfish
Scorpaena mellissii Günther, 1868



Known only from St
Helena Island.



Bastard Cunningfish, Bicolor Butterflyfish

Prognathodes dichrous (Günther, 1869)



Known only from St Helena
and Ascension Islands.



Bastard Hogfish, St Helena Sharpnose Pufferfish
Canthigaster sanctaehelenae (Günther, 1870)



Known only from St Helena and Ascension
Islands.

Photo: Judith Brown

Silver Eel, Melliss's Conger

Ariosoma mellissii (Günther, 1870)



Photo: Judith Brown



Known only from St Helena Island.

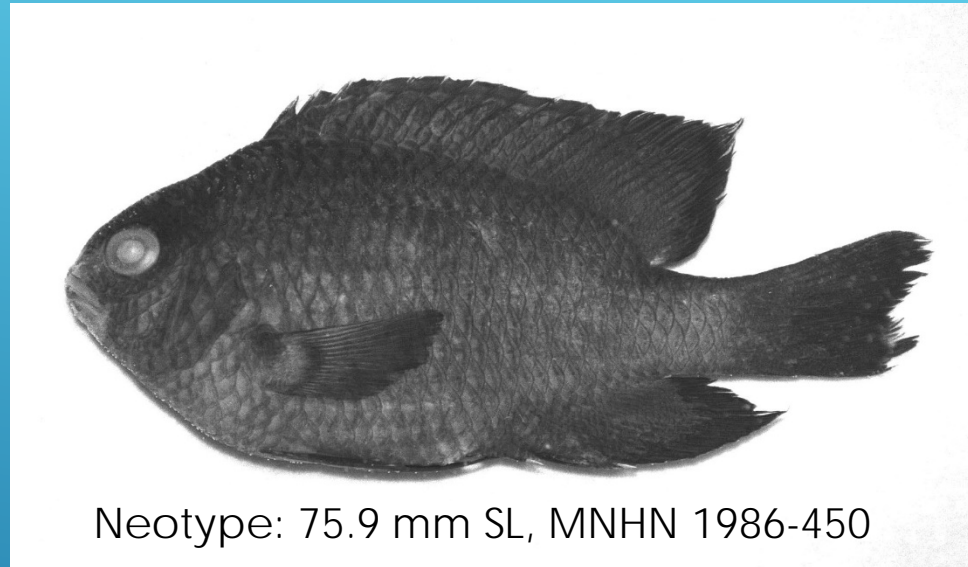
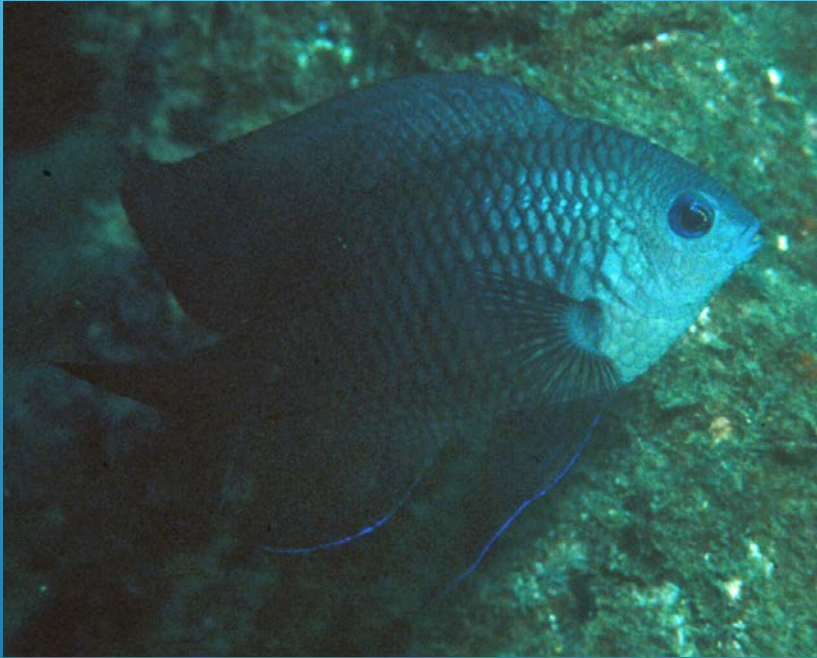
Henri-Émile Sauvage



Curator at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Described two endemics collected by Cahagne at St Helena.

Bastard Cavalley Pilot, St Helena Gregory

Stegastes sanctaehelenae (Sauvage, 1879)



Neotype: 75.9 mm SL, MNHN 1986-450

Known only from St Helena Island.



Stegastes lubbocki Allen & Smith,
1992 from Ascension

Old Wife, St Helena White Seabream

Diplodus helenae (Sauvage, 1879)



Known only from St Helena Island.

Deepwater Brown Mullet, St Helena Comber

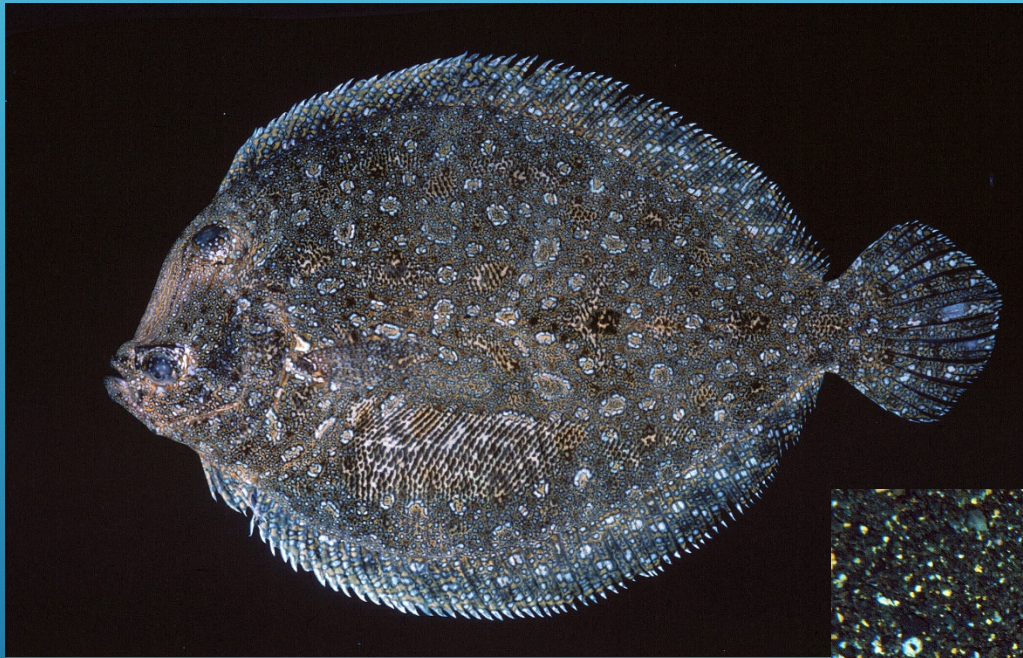
Serranus sanctaehelenae Boulenger, 1895



Originally collected by John Melliss in 1867.
Known only from St Helena and Ascension
Islands. (*Centropristis brasiliensis* of Günther and Melliss)

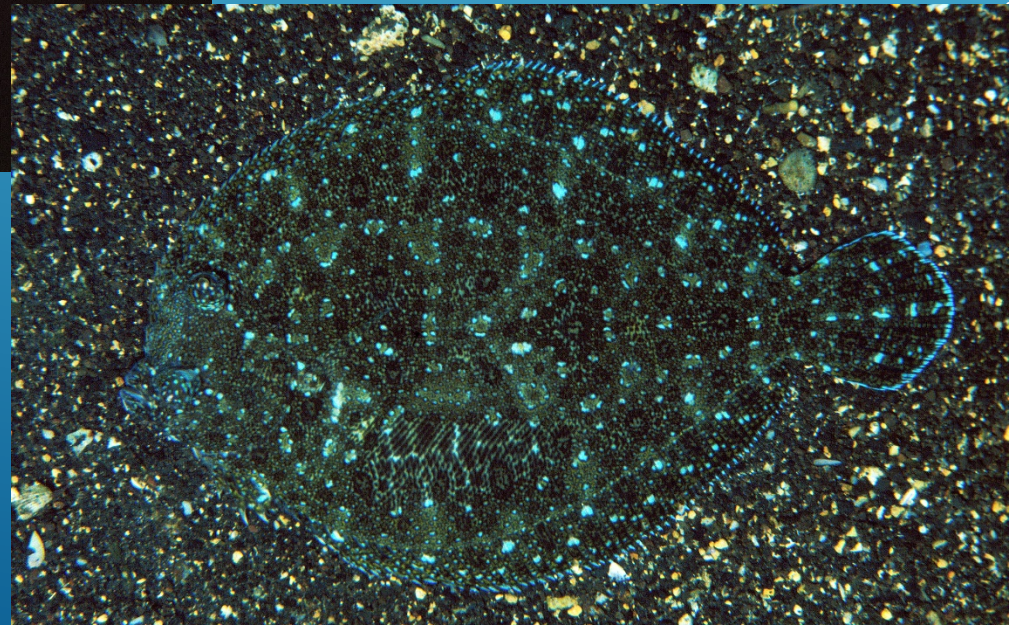
Solefish or Flounder, St Helena Flounder

Bothus mellissi Norman, 1931



The *Rhomboidichthys* sp.n.?
of Günther and Melliss

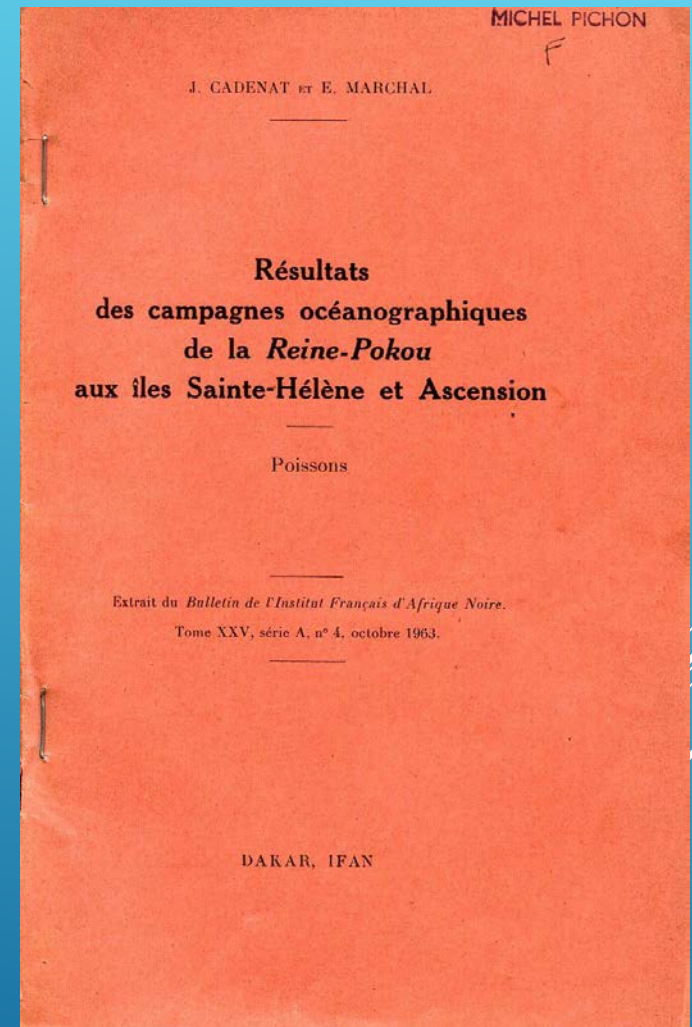
Known only from St Helena
and Ascension Islands.



French research vessel *Reine-Pokou* visited both Ascension and St Helena in 1962

Jean Cadenat and E Marchal collected 54 fish specimens from 23 species from St Helena and described one new species from Ascension (endemic to the two islands) and one from St Helena (since found to be widespread).

Summarised all fish literature from the two islands and made first serious attempt to look at the zoogeographic relationships of the islands.

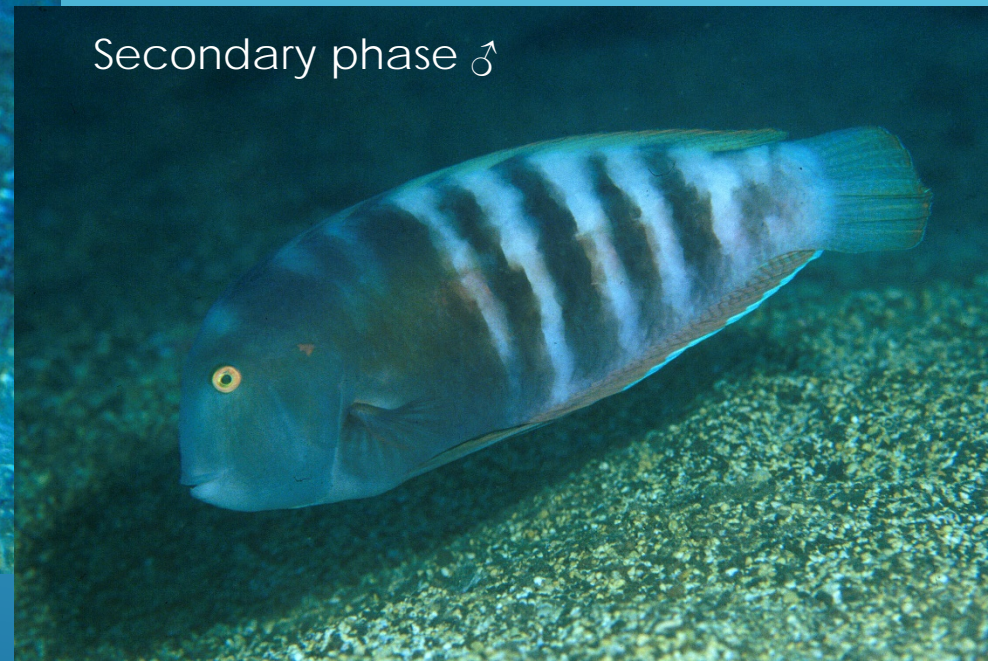


Marmalade Razorfish

Xyrichtys blanchardi (Cadenat & Marchal, 1963)



Primary phase

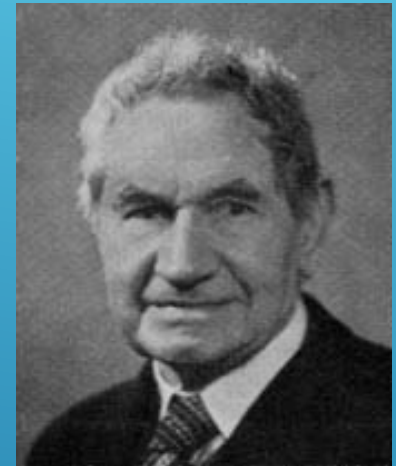


Secondary phase ♂

First described from Ascension. Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands.

Springer's Blenny

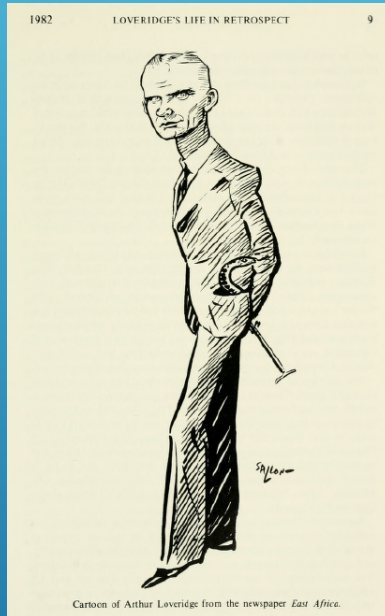
Scartella springeri (Bauchot, 1967)



Theodor
Mortensen

Known only from St Helena Island. Collected by the Danish naturalist Theodor Mortensen in 1930. During two months he collected 217 fish specimens from 36 species, 6 species new to science.

Professor Arthur Loveridge, retired herpetologist and Mr Alwyne Wheeler, Fish Section, Natural History Museum, London



Loveridge (Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard) retired to St Helena in 1957. From 1959-1971, with help of Superintendent Frank Martin of the St Helena police he collected 317 fish specimens from 65 species of which 12 were new records for the island. All deposited in the BMNH.

Red Scorpionfish

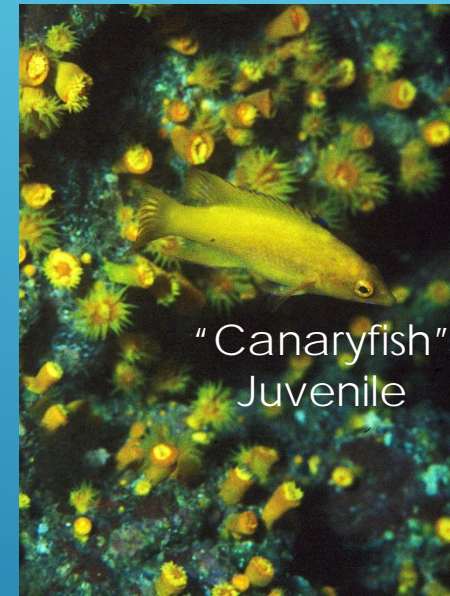
Scorpaenodes insularis Eschmeyer, 1971



Holotype collected by Arthur Loveridge. Known only from St Helena (where first found), Ascension Island and St Paul's Rocks.

Parrotfish, Island Hogfish

Bodianus insularis Gomon & Lubbock, 1980

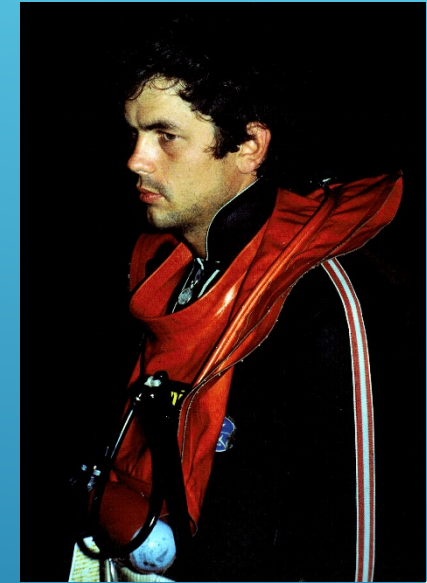


"Canaryfish"
Juvenile

Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands and St Paul's Rocks. Paratypes collected by John Melliss and Arthur Loveridge among others.

Hotlips Triplefin

Helcogramma ascensionis Lubbock, 1980



Roger Lubbock

First found in tidal pool at Ascension in 1977.
Known only from St Helena and Ascension
Islands. This paratype presumed to be a breeding
male due to colouration.

Ascension Goby

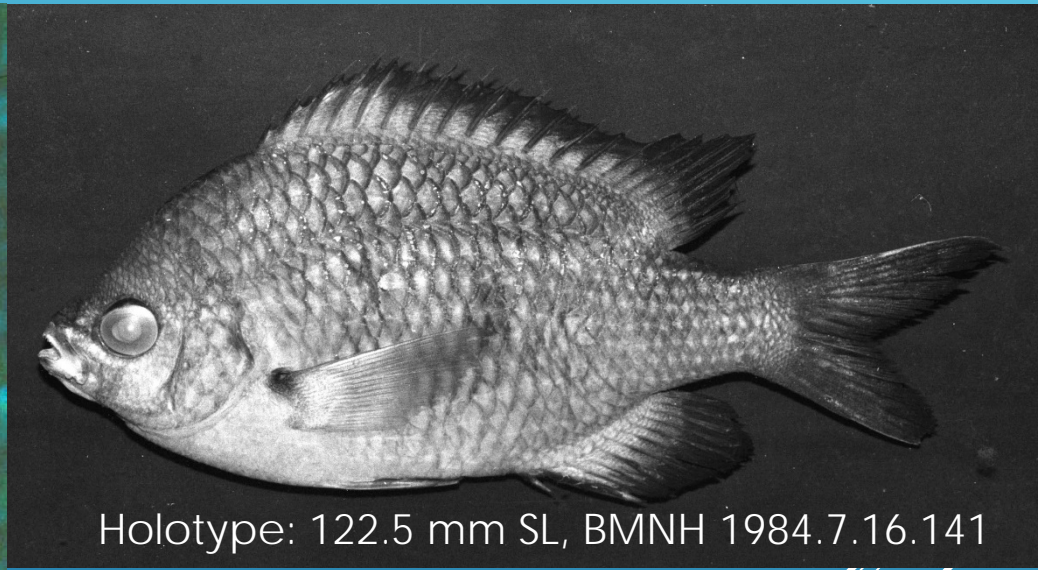
Priolepis ascensionis (Dawson & Edwards, 1987)



First collected by Roger Lubbock at Ascension in 1977 (listed as *Quisquilius* sp.). Known only from St Helena and Ascension Islands.

Bastard Five Finger, St Helena Damselfish

Chromis sanctaehelenae Edwards, 1987



Holotype: 122.5 mm SL, BMNH 1984.7.16.141

Known only from St Helena Island. Some Paratypes collected by John Melliss and Arthur Loveridge (some killed by explosion on the wreck of the *Papanui* in 1968).

Skulpin, St Helena Mora

Physiculus helenensis Paulin, 1989

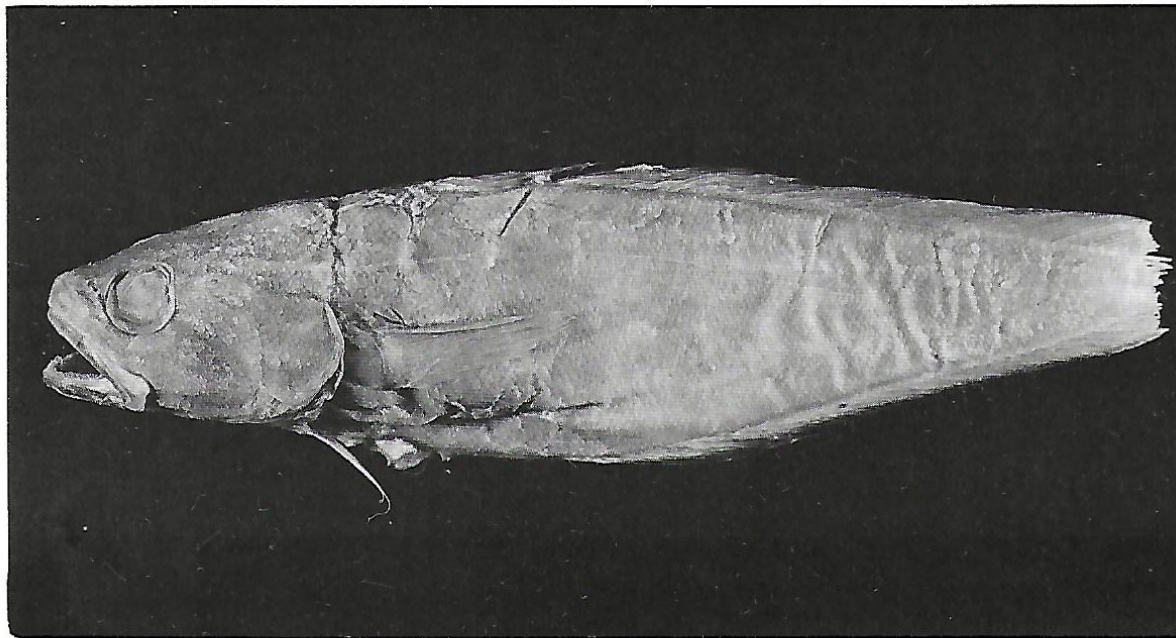
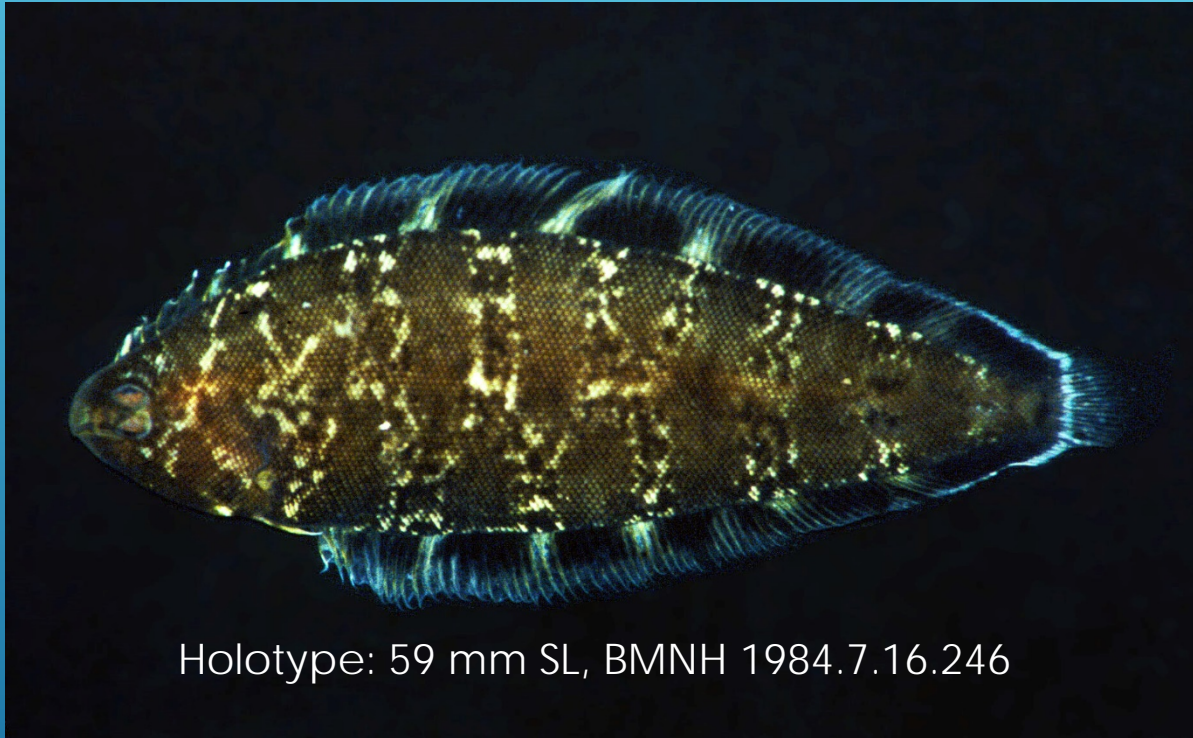


Fig. 9 *Physiculus helenensis* (BMNH 1867.12.26.15), 230.0 mm TL, holotype.

Known only from St Helena Island. Holotype collected by John Melliss but Albert Günther in 1868 mistakenly thought it was *P. dalwigkii* Kaup, 1858 from the eastern Atlantic. Only known from 2 damaged specimens.

Reticulated Tonguefish

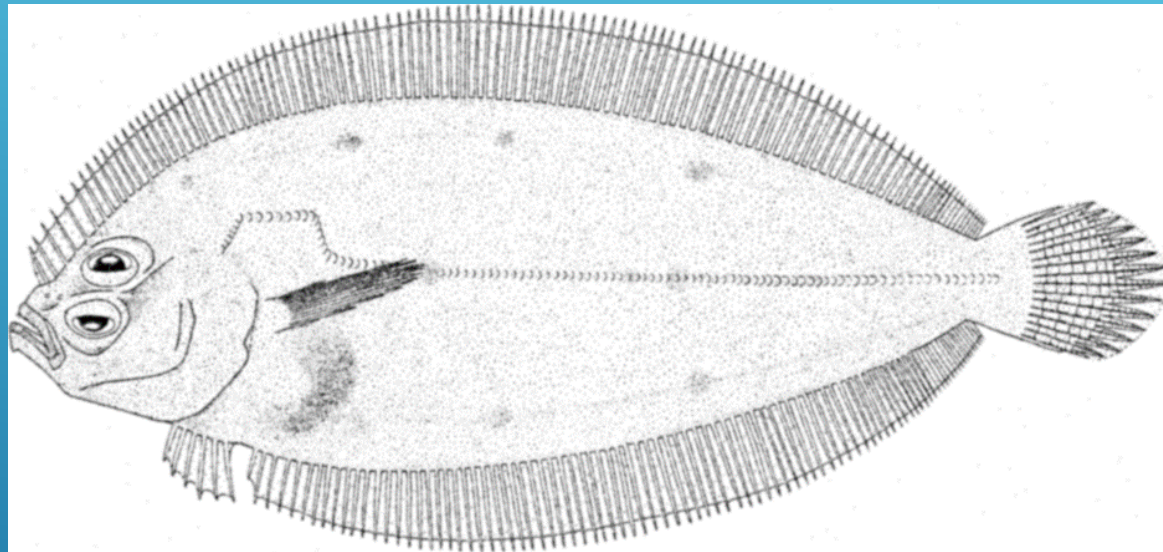
Symphurus reticulatus Munroe, 1990



Known only from St Helena Island. Holotype collected from 7 m depth in James Bay. Paratypes were collected by Theodor Mortensen in 1930.

St Helena Moonflounder

Monolene helenensis Amaoka & Imamura, 2000

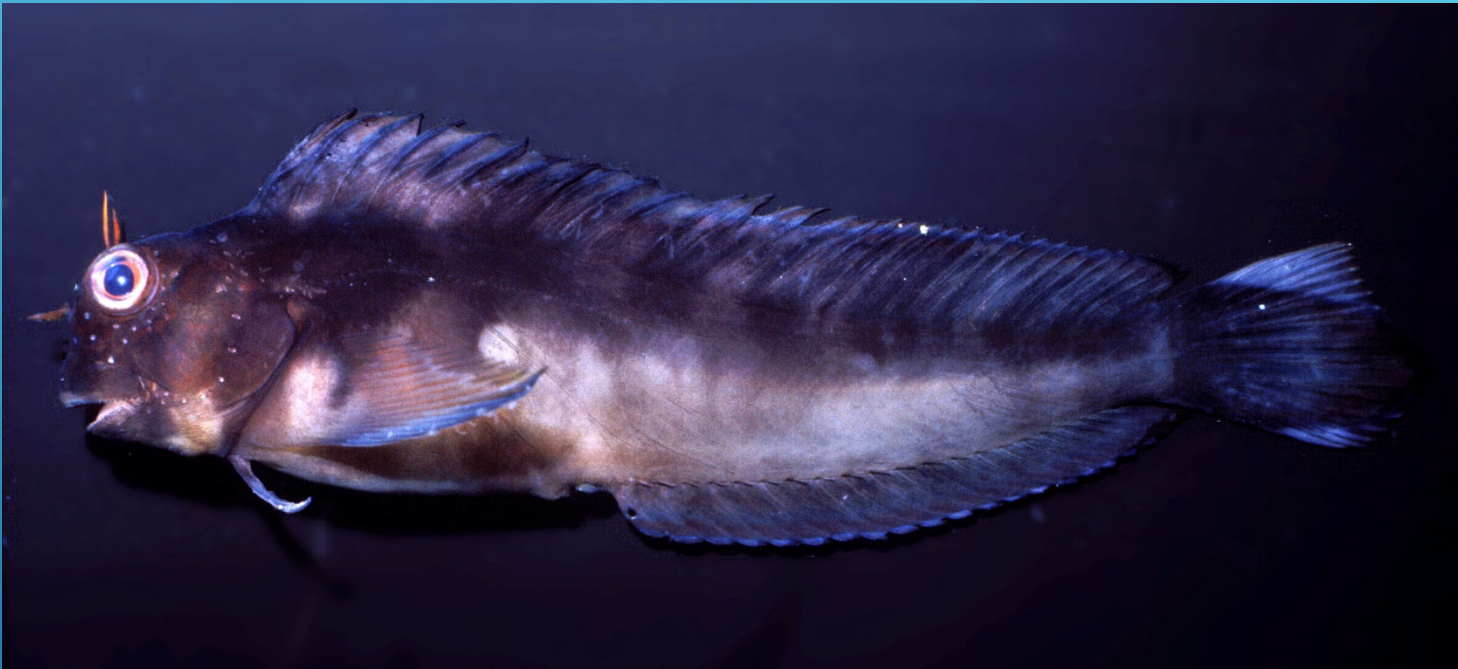


Holotype: 207.6 mm SL, HUMZ 9995

Known only from deepwater north of St Helena Island. Occurs from 163-460 m depth near St Helena.

Devilfish, Redlip Blenny

Ophioblennius sp.



Recent molecular genetic studies indicate that St Helena and Ascension populations of *Ophioblennius atlanticus* (Valenciennes, 1836) appear to be distinct from those in Brazil and in the eastern Atlantic and thus may be an undescribed endemic species.

Dog Eel, St Helena Conger

Conger sp.



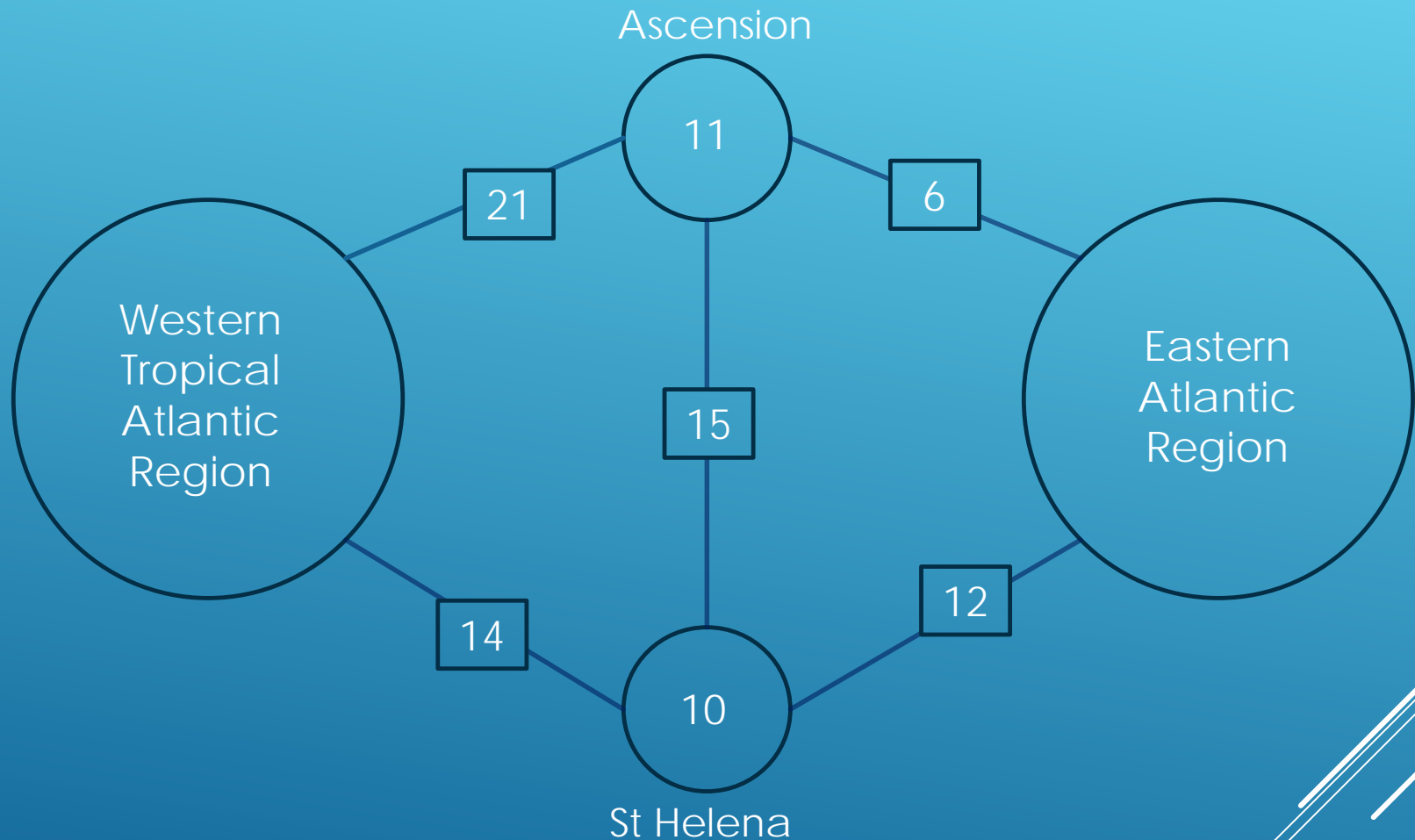
Two specimens only are known to science, one collected by John Melliss in 1869 and one by the Fisheries Corporation in 1983.

These have characters which match the American Conger, *Conger oceanicus* (Mitchill, 1818) but the nearest place this is found is Florida!

David Smith, the world expert on congers thinks it is likely a new species, so far only known from St Helena, that just happens to be similar to *C. oceanicus*.

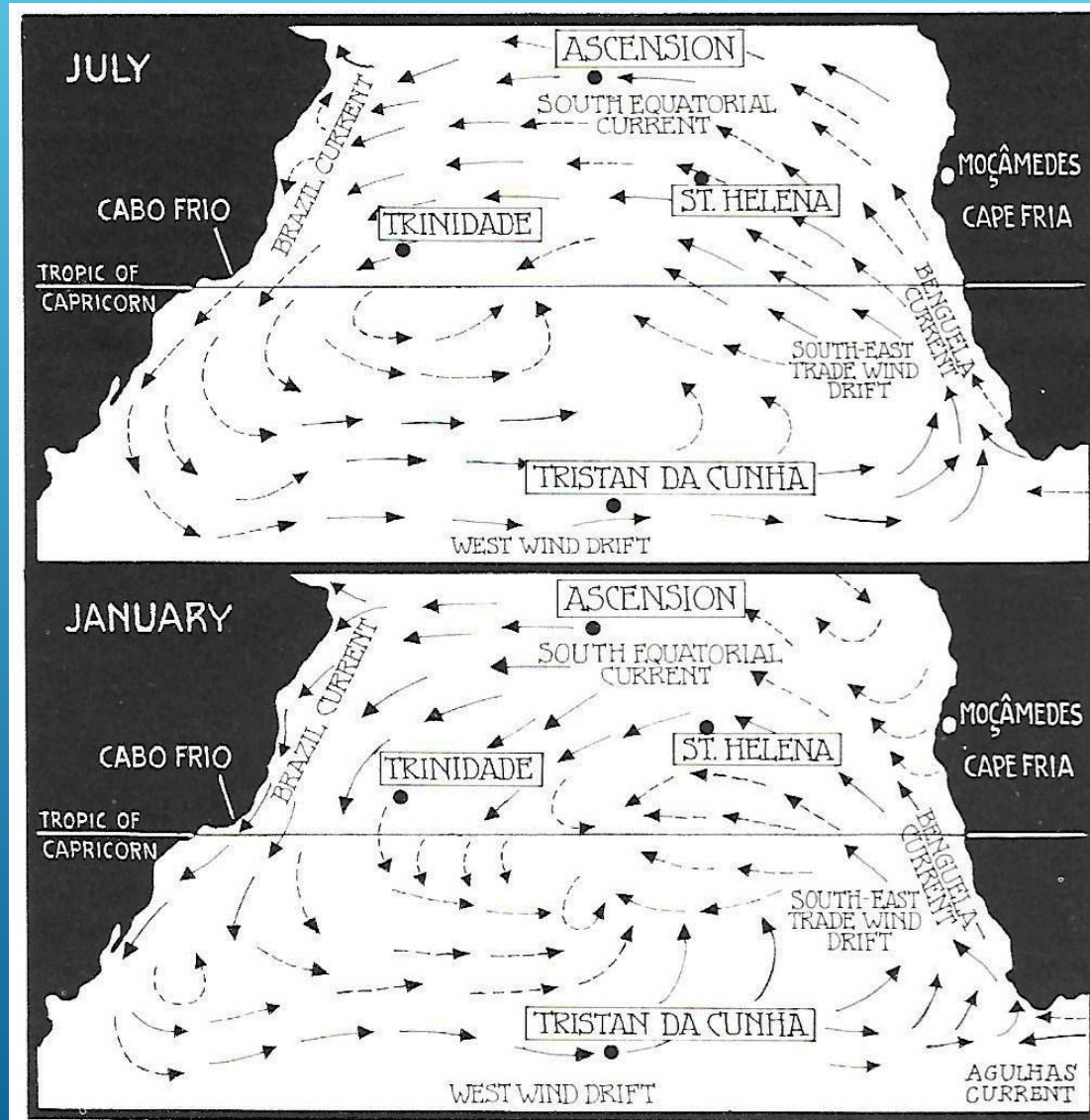


Relationship of fishes to those in neighbouring regions



+ 3 central Atlantic endemics
known only from St Helena,
Ascension and St Paul's Rocks

Surface currents



Conservation status

About 10 endemic fishes and another 15 species shared only with Ascension.

No obvious threats so generally considered to be of "Least Concern".

Several listed as "Data Deficient" as no data on population size.

Maybe we should be more concerned (or at least better informed)?

1. The Red Eel (*Myroconger compressus*) which Melliss described as "very commonly taken in about 8-9 fathoms and used for food" is now unknown at the island.

2. Large fish kills in 2006 where 10,000s of fish found floating dead on the sea surface. Emma Bennett estimated 17,000 *Chaetodon sanctaehelenae* killed.

3. Climate change.

