



A new species of *Parapercis* (Teleostei: Pinguipedidae) from Madagascar

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Abstract

A new species of sandperch is described from the shallow nearshore reefs of the Masoala Peninsula, northeastern Madagascar. The new species is distinguished from congeners occurring in the region by a unique pigmentation pattern on the caudal fin comprising two large, oblong black blotches, with the smaller of the two markings located dorsally near the fin base and a much larger and more elongate patch situated ventrally, as well as the presence of numerous smaller black blotches forming two to three bands distally on the caudal membrane, two longitudinal series of six to nine prominent black blotches on the mid and lower flank, and the presence of large diffuse dark brown blotches on the snout, lips, cheek and opercle.

Key words: grubfish, Masoala Peninsula, *Parapercis maramara* sp. nov., sandperch, Western Indian Ocean

Introduction

The pinguipedid genus *Parapercis* Bleeker, 1863 currently comprises over 70 valid species, and is distributed from the Eastern Atlantic to the Central Pacific oceans. Pinguipedids are ornately pigmented, elongate fishes commonly called sandperches (also grubfish, weevers, whittings, or sandsmelts) in reference to their benthic lifestyle. Pinguipedids are generally found over sandflats or in rubble, on or near coral reefs (Randall, 2005).

Owing to increased scrutiny of so-called “cosmopolitan” species (e.g., *P. hexophtalma*; Imamura & Yoshino, 2007) and recent intensified collecting efforts in remote localities that have not seen much prior ichthyological survey work, it is clear that the diversity of *Parapercis* has been largely underestimated. As observed for several other coral-reef associated lineages (e.g. damselfishes, gobies, surgeonfishes), the results of rigorous morphological and molecular analyses reveal that the alleged “cosmopolitan” ranges of many species are, in fact, much more restricted, and that what were once considered single widespread species are frequently found to comprise species complexes (e.g., Imamura & Yoshino, 2007; Klanten et al., 2007; Kon et al., 2007; Drew, 2008; Chakrabarty et al., 2010). In the past decade alone, 24 new species of *Parapercis* have been described (Randall & McCosker, 2002; Randall, 2003, 2008; Johnson, 2006; Randall & Yamakawa, 2006; Imamura & Yoshino, 2007; Randall et al., 2008; Ho & Shao, 2010; Prokofiev, 2010; Liao et al., 2011) from throughout the geographic range of the genus.

Herein, we formally describe a new species of *Parapercis* from shallow nearshore coral reefs in northeastern Madagascar. Further, we discuss the diagnostic morphological features that distinguish the new species from congeners and other Western Indian Ocean members of *Parapercis*.

Material and methods

Osteological features of the new species and related taxa were examined using digital radiographs, dry skeletal preparations, and specimens cleared-and-stained (C&S) for bone and cartilage (following the protocol of Taylor & Van Dyke, 1985). Morphometric measurements were recorded to the nearest 0.1 mm using dial calipers. Standard length (SL) is used throughout. Vertebral counts exclude the ural centrum (= last half-centrum). Terminology fol-