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A new species of the hoplichthyid genus *Hoplichthys* (Teleostei: Hoplichthyidae) from northern Western Australia

YUKI NAGANO¹, MARK A. MCGROUTHER² & MAMORU YABE³

¹Chair of Marine Biology and Biodiversity (Systematic Ichthyology), Graduate School of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, 3-1-1 Minato-cho, Hakodate, Hokkaido 041-8611, Japan. E-mail: yuki.ghost_flatheads@fish.hokudai.ac.jp

²Australian Museum, 6 College Street, Sydney, NSW 2010, Australia. E-mail: Mark.McGrouther@austmus.gov.au

³Laboratory of Marine Biology and Biodiversity (Systematic Ichthyology), Faculty of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, 3-1-1 Minato-cho, Hakodate, Hokkaido 041-8611, Japan. E-mail: myabe@fish.hokudai.ac.jp

Abstract

A new species of hoplichthyid, *Hoplichthys imamurai*, is described on basis of three specimens (128.9–143.6 mm SL) collected from northern Western Australia. It is clearly distinguished from its congeners by the following combination of characters: short preoptic snout (31.2–32.7% HL); vomer without teeth; long, thin, gill rakers; low first dorsal fin, its adpressed tips not reaching origin of second dorsal fin in males; some filament-like elongated second dorsal-fin rays in males; emarginate caudal fin, upper edge elongated and filament-like in males. Toothless vomer and form of caudal fin are characters unique to *H. imamurai* in this genus.

Key words: *Hoplichthys imamurai*, new species, Hoplichthyidae, Western Australia

Introduction

The family Hoplichthyidae (ghost flatheads) comprises only one genus, *Hoplichthys* and 11 valid species (Matsubara and Ochiai, 1950a; Nagano *et al.*, 2012, 2013). These fishes inhabit the continental shelf and slope at depths of about 50–1500m in the Pacific and Indian oceans (Matsubara and Ochiai, 1950a; McGrouther, 1999). *Hoplichthys* is characterized by an extremely depressed head, the dorsal surface covered with many spines and serrated ridges, an elongated and mostly scaleless body, a single row of spines on lateral scutes along the body, and the lowest three to five pectoral-fin rays free.

In April 1982, three hoplichthyid specimens were collected from northwestern Australia (Fig. 1) during exploratory trawling by FRV *Soela*. These specimens were reported as "*Hoplichthys regani*" or "*Hoplichthys regani*?" by Gloerfelt-Tarp and Kailola (1984) and "*Hoplichthys* sp." by Sainsbury *et al.* (1984). Paxton *et al.* (1989) regarded these specimens as an undescribed species. Nagano *et al.* (2012) also considered them to be undescribed species, and concluded that the true *Hoplichthys regani* Jordan, 1908 was known from only its type locality, Kagoshima, Japan. Based on an examination of the specimens, we determined that they are neither *Hoplichthys regani* Jordan, 1908 nor the other similar species, *Hoplichthys citrinus* Gilbert, 1905, *Hoplichthys gilberti* Jordan and Richardson, 1908 and *Hoplichthys ogilbyi* McCulloch, 1914, in having a vomer without teeth, long gill rakers, a low first dorsal fin, and an emarginate caudal fin. Subsequently we found an additional specimen of the species deposited in the fish collection of Australian Museum (AMS). This specimen was collected from Western Australia, off Point Cloates in 1991. We herein describe a new species of the genus *Hoplichthys* based on these specimens.

Materials and methods

Counts and proportional measurements follow Nagano *et al.* (2012), except: the pectoral-fin length is from the base