



***Bathycongrus trimaculatus*, a new congrid eel (Teleostei: Anguilliformes) from the southwestern Pacific, with a redescription of *Bathycongrus bleekeri* Fowler**

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Abstract

Bathycongrus trimaculatus is described from 16 specimens collected from moderately deep water off the Solomon Islands, Fiji, and New Caledonia in the southwestern Pacific. It is distinguished from all other species by the presence of three conspicuous dark spots in the dorsal and anal fins; by having the vomerine teeth in an elongate patch with all the teeth about the same size and none of them greatly enlarged; by having fewer vertebrae; and by its small size. *Bathycongrus bleekeri* is redescribed, based on the unique holotype and two additional specimens, and compared to other species of the genus.

Key words: Teleostei, Anguilliformes, taxonomy

Introduction

The congrid eels of the genus *Bathycongrus* inhabit moderately deep waters of the outer continental shelf and continental slope of tropical and subtropical oceans worldwide.

They are difficult to resolve taxonomically because they lack strongly marked external characters. Castle & Smith (1999) examined numerous specimens from various parts of the Indo-West Pacific region and recognized seven species, although they recognized that their study was "not...the last word on this troublesome genus." In this paper, we describe a new species of *Bathycongrus* from the southwestern Pacific that differs notably from all of the previously known species. In addition, we redescribe a poorly known species, *Bathycongrus bleekeri* Fowler, based on newly found material. We present a key to the known species and a summary of valid names and synonyms.

Material and methods

Specimens are deposited in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (MNHN) and the National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC (USNM).

Counts, measurements, and bone terminology are as in Smith (1989a: 460). All measurements are in mm, and unless otherwise stated, lengths are total lengths.