



Acanthopagrus randalli (Perciformes: Sparidae), a new black seabream from the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

A new sparid species, *Acanthopagrus randalli*, is described on the basis of two specimens, collected from Bahrain and Kuwait, Persian Gulf, respectively. *Acanthopagrus randalli* is similar to *A. akazakii* Iwatsuki, Kimura & Yoshino 2008, *A. butcheri* (Munro 1949), and *A. sivicolus* Akazaki 1962 in having a silvery-gray body with dusky fins and 4 ½ scale rows between the fifth dorsal-fin spine base and lateral line. It differs from the three latter species in having the following combination of characters: eyes of larger specimen with a more posterior position because of a prominently convex dorsal head profile from snout to just above eye; 4 or 5 wide vertical bands (6 or 7 horizontal scale rows' width) on body (vs. absent in *A. akazakii*, 6 to 10 bands in *A. butcheri*, and 8 to 12 bands in *A. sivicolus*) that are presumably clearer in stressed live specimens; conspicuous diffuse dark blotch at the first to second scale of the lateral-line origin that is continuous with a diffuse dark blotch covering upper cleithrum and upper posterior opercle; anal-fin membrane hyaline in smaller specimen and in larger specimen the membrane is hyaline with sparse black melanophores that are lacking around posteriormost anal-fin rays; posterior margin of caudal fin darker than rest of fin. Nominal species of *Acanthopagrus* are discussed with notes on other congeners.

Key words: Taxonomy; Sparidae; *Acanthopagrus randalli*; Persian Gulf; New species

Introduction

Recent studies (Iwatsuki & Carpenter 2006; Iwatsuki *et al.* 2006) have uncovered both species complexes and species groups within the sparid genus *Acanthopagrus*. The newly described *A. taiwanensis* Iwatsuki & Carpenter, 2006, from southwestern Taiwan shows a close affinity with certain congeners based on body shape, fin coloration and number of scale rows above the lateral line. Similarly, Iwatsuki *et al.* (2006) and Kume & Yoshino (2008) described new species of *Acanthopagrus* and demonstrated close resemblances and distinct differences with specific complexes within this genus. We describe here the new species, *Acanthopagrus randalli* sp. nov., and further define the complex of species to which it belongs.

There are 10 currently recognized species assigned to *Acanthopagrus* and one additional species currently placed within *Sparidentex* that is sometimes included in *Acanthopagrus* (e.g., Eschmeyer 1998; Iwatsuki & Carpenter 2006; Iwatsuki *et al.* 2006). These 11 species can be roughly allocated into six morphological forms: 1) the Blackfin Seabream Form I with 3 ½ or 4 ½ scale rows between the fifth dorsal-fin spine base and lateral line and molariform teeth (Gomon *et al.* 1994) that includes *A. akazakii* Iwatsuki, Kimura & Yoshino 2006, *A. berda* (Forsskål 1775), *A. butcheri* (Munro 1949), *A. sivicolus* Akazaki 1962 and *A. taiwanensis*; 2) the Blackfin Seabream Form II with 5 ½ or 6 ½ scale rows between the fifth dorsal-fin spine base and lateral line and molariform teeth (Akazaki 1962, 1984) that includes *A. schlegelii* (Bleeker 1854); 3) the Blackfin Seabream Form III with no molariform teeth (Bauchot & Smith 1983) that includes *Sparidentex hasta* (Cuvier