



Revision of the bathyal fish genus *Benthocometes* (Teleostei: Ophidiidae) with a new species from off NW Australia

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Abstract

The bathyal genus *Benthocometes* (Teleostei: Ophidiidae) is revised based on 29 specimens from the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and one from off NW Australia. Examination of the Atlantic and Mediterranean material confirmed the synonymizing of the three Atlantic species, *B. robustus*, *B. armatum* and *B. muraenolepis*. The Australian specimen represents a new species, *B. australiensis*, differing from *B. robustus* in e.g. the number of long rakers on the anterior gill arch, the form of the palatine dentition and the predorsal and upper jaw lengths.

Key words: Ophidiidae, *Benthocometes*, revision, new species, NW Australia

Introduction

In 2007 a 93 mm SL specimen of the genus *Benthocometes* was trawled off Northwest Australia during a “Southern Surveyor” cruise. Hitherto, this genus was only known from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean including the Mediterranean Sea. Atlantic and Mediterranean material was borrowed in order to make a specific identification of the Australian specimen. The comparison showed that the Australian specimen differed in so many characters that it distinctly belongs to an undescribed species. According to Bougis & Ruivo (1954) the three Atlantic species, *B. armatum* (Döderlein, 1886), *B. muraenolepis* (Vaillant, 1888) and *B. robustus* (Goode & Bean, 1886) are not specifically different. Examination of the Atlantic material borrowed for this revision supports Bougis & Ruivo’s conclusion. The new species is here described and new information on *B. robustus* is presented.

Material and methods

For institutional abbreviations see Eschmeyer (2010). Terminology, measurements and counts follow Nielsen *et al.* (1999).

Benthocometes Goode & Bean, 1896

Type species. *Neobythites robustus* Goode & Bean, 1886 by subsequent selection by Jordan & Evermann 1896: 2514. Type locality: off Moro Castle, Cuba.

Diagnosis. Body robust with a short, stubby head and terminal mouth; lateral line not reaching base of caudal fin; 4–10 predorsal pterygiophores; head and body covered with small, overlapping scales; eyes equal to or greater than length of snout; two posteriorly directed spines on opercle; one basibranchial tooth patch; vomerine tooth patch lacking lateral extensions; anterior gill arch with 3–12 long rakers; pseudobranchial filaments 5–8; pectoral fin rays 27–33; pelvic fins each with two rays. Owing to the discovery of the new