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Redescription of the Indo-West Pacific scorpionfish (Scorpaenidae), *Neomerinthe erostris* (Alcock 1896), a senior synonym of *Scorpaena gibbifrons* Fowler 1938, *N. rotunda* Chen 1981, and *N. bathyperimensis* Zajonz & Klausewitz 2002

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Abstract

The Indo-West Pacific species, *Neomerinthe erostris* (Alcock 1896), originally described as *Scorpaena erostris*, is redescribed as a senior synonym of *Scorpaena gibbifrons* Fowler 1938, *N. rotunda* Chen 1981, and *N. bathyperimensis* Zajonz & Klausewitz 2002. Although the latter three nominal species have been regarded as valid species and *N. erostris* has not been reported since 1898, examinations of type specimens of the four nominal species revealed that they represent a single species. A lectotype of *Scorpaena erostris* is herein designated. *Neomerinthe erostris* is characterized by having a distinct longitudinal ridge on the lateral surface of the maxilla and a strongly rounded dorsal profile of the head.

Key words: synonymy, taxonomy, morphology, description, lectotype designation.

Introduction

There has been no comprehensive taxonomic study of the Indo-Pacific species of *Neomerinthe* Fowler 1935, but 13 nominal species are currently recognized (Motomura *et al.* 2011a). Examination of all available type specimens of these nominal species revealed that four nominal species, *Scorpaena erostris* Alcock 1896, *Scorpaena gibbifrons* Fowler 1938, *Neomerinthe rotunda* Chen 1981, and *Neomerinthe bathyperimensis* Zajonz & Klausewitz 2002, share several distinct characters, e.g., the presence of a distinct longitudinal ridge on the lateral surface of the maxilla and a rounded dorsal profile of the head.

Scorpaena erostris has not been reported since its original description (Alcock 1896) and subsequent illustration (Alcock 1898), whereas all of the remaining three have been regarded as valid species by several authors (e.g., Poss 1999; Zajonz & Klausewitz 2002; Golani & Bogorodsky 2010). Although *S. gibbifrons* has been treated as a valid species of *Scorpaena* Linnaeus 1758 (Herre 1952; Poss 1999), it is herein regarded as a species of *Neomerinthe*. In addition, all of the four nominal species are herein regarded as conspecific, and the oldest available name, *N. erostris*, applies to this species. In this paper, *N. erostris* is redescribed and a review of the historical treatment of the genus *Neomerinthe* is given.

Material and methods

Measurements follow Motomura (2004a,b) and Motomura *et al.* (2005b, 2006a,b, 2012). Counts follow Motomura *et al.* (2005a–c, 2006b) and Motomura & Johnson (2006). The last two soft rays of both the dorsal and anal fins are counted as single rays, each pair being associated with a single pterygiophore. Standard length is expressed as SL.