

***Ecsenius niue*, new species of blenniid fish, and new distribution records for other species in the *Opsifrontalis* species group**

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Abstract

Ecsenius niue is described from Niue Island, SW Pacific. It is a member of the *Opsifrontalis* species group and is most similar to the Fijian endemic *E. fijiensis*, from which it differs in having six, as opposed to seven, vertical pairs of dark spots on the body posterior to a vertical from the base of the first segmented dorsal-fin ray, and in having the posteriormost pair of dark spots posteriorly elongate and attenuating onto the base of the caudal fin, as opposed to the spots being roughly circular and discrete. It differs from the superficially similar *E. tigris* (islands of the Queensland Plateau) in lacking the three or four dark spots on the body ventral to those on the dorsal body contour below the spinous dorsal fin. New distribution records are given for *E. axelrodi*, *E. bathi*, and *E. opsifrontalis*.

Key words: Blenniidae; *Ecsenius niue*, new species; *Ecsenius bathi*; *Ecsenius fijiensis*; *Ecsenius opsifrontalis*; Niue

Introduction

This study is the eighth in a series published by the author that treats the systematics and/or biogeography of the Indo-Pacific blenniid fish genus *Ecsenius* McCulloch (Springer, 1971, 1972, 1988, 1991; Springer and Randall, 1999; Springer and Allen, 2001; McKinney and Springer, 1976). The purpose of the present paper is to describe a new species in the *Opsifrontalis* species group (Springer, 1988:76-81) and to mention new distribution records for three other species in the group, *E. axelrodi* Springer, *E. bathi* Springer, and *E. opsifrontalis* Chapman and Schultz.

The synapomorphy that defines the *Opsifrontalis* species group is the presence on the body (of living or freshly dead specimens) of pinkish to reddish to brownish-orange stripes and/or bands in at least one color-pattern form of each species. These colors may be