

Description of a new species of the fish genus *Acanthoplesiops* Regan (Teleostei: Plesiopidae: Acanthoclininae) from Tonga

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Abstract

Acanthoplesiops naka sp. n. is described from the 9.9 mm SL holotype collected at Ofolanga Island of the Ha'apai Group of Tonga. Its dorsal-fin spine count of XVIII is unique in the genus. The following combination of characters also distinguishes it from congeners: first two dorsal-fin pterygiophores in the 3rd interneural space (anterior dorsal-fin formula $?/I+I/I/I/I/I/I/I$); 3 dentary pores; 2 intertemporal pores; head and body generally brownish with darker pigment spots (from shrunken melanophores), excepting a paler stripe from the anterior half of the symphyseal flap on the lower lip to the origin of the dorsal fin (continuing on to the first dorsal spine), a pale spot on the pectoral-fin base, and a pale caudal peduncle continuous with pale bases of last 3 segmented dorsal- and anal-fin rays; regular ctenoid scales; no membranous attachment of last dorsal- or anal-fin rays to caudal fin. The new species might be the sister taxon to *A. psilogaster* as they share the putative derived character of two dorsal-fin pterygiophores in the 3rd interneural space.

Key words: Plesiopidae, Acanthoclininae, *Acanthoplesiops naka*, new species, taxonomy, Tonga

Introduction

The Plesiopidae is an Indo-Pacific family of small, tropical and subtropical reef-associated fishes. The family is divided into six subfamilies: Trachinopinae, Assessorinae, Paraplesiopinae, Fraudellinae, Plesiopinae and Acanthoclininae (Mooi 1993). The Acanthoclininae were revised by Smith-Vaniz and Johnson (1990) who recognized twelve species in four genera: *Acanthoclinus*, *Acanthoplesiops*, *Belios*, *Belonepterygion*. *Acanthoplesiops* is considered to have four valid species, all very small with no specimens larger than 27 mm SL. The genus is unique among acanthoclinines (and plesiopids) in