



***Gymnothorax baranesi*, a new moray eel (Anguilliformes: Muraenidae) from the Red Sea**

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Abstract

Gymnothorax baranesi n. sp. is described from three specimens collected in moderately deep water in the Gulf of Aquaba, Red Sea, Israel. It is characterized by irregular, pale, rosette-like spots on a dark background. The snout is somewhat slender. The intermaxillary teeth are arranged in one peripheral and one median row. The maxillary teeth are arranged in 1–2 rows, the inner row, when present, consists of only two depressible teeth. The new species is compared to other pale-spotted species in the Indian Ocean.

Key words: taxonomy, Indian Ocean

Introduction

The Muraenidae (moray eels) is a large and diverse family of eels found around the world in tropical and subtropical waters. Morays are common and frequently collected inhabitants of coral reefs, but many species live in offshore waters, where their cryptic habits make them difficult to collect. The specimens described in this paper were collected from a depth of approximately 200 meters off Eilat, Israel, in the northern Red Sea. They could not be identified with any known species and are herein described as a new species. The fact that the new species was collected in an area that has been well studied (Baranes and Golani, 1993) for many years (and in fact, directly in front of a major marine laboratory) indicates how much we still have to learn about the ichthyofauna inhabiting this peculiar biotope.

Methods

Counts and measurements are as in Böhlke (1989). All measurements are in mm, and unless otherwise stated, lengths are total lengths. In the description of counts and measurements, the figure in parentheses is that of the holotype. Type specimens are deposited in the collections at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HJU) and the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (USNM).

***Gymnothorax baranesi* n. sp. (Figs. 1–4)**

Holotype: HJU 18976 (male, 857 mm TL), Red Sea, Gulf of Aqaba, 29°29'33.0" N, 34°55.07.8" E, 200 m, S. Einbinder, 23 April 2002.