



***Briggsia hastingsi*, a new genus and species of clingfish from Oman**

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Abstract

Briggsia hastingsi is described as a new genus and species of gobioid fish from a single specimen, 22 mm in standard length, collected in 2 m depth on the southeastern coast of Oman. The genus differs principally from other aspasmine genera in having fewer dorsal- and anal-fin rays (4 each) and a shorter head (head length 2.5 in standard length).

Key words: Gobioidae, Aspasmineae, *Briggsia*, Oman

Introduction

The clingfish family Gobioidae is well named for the ability of the species to attach firmly to the substratum with a thoracic sucking disc, developed partly from modified pelvic fins of one small spine and four soft rays. All the species have a single posterior dorsal fin without spines, an anal fin without spines, broad pectoral fins with 16–31 rays, no scales, no swim bladder, usually a broad head, and a slender tapering body. A skin toxin was reported for two species (Hori *et al.*, 1979). The family is represented in all tropical to warm temperate seas, and some species are found in fresh water. Many occur in shallow water, often in areas of high surge because of their adhering capability; many are cryptic, hiding beneath stones or among algae, and some species are commensal with invertebrates. Briggs (1955) revised the family, which he divided into eight subfamilies, characterized principally by the number of gill arches, whether the gill membranes are attached to the isthmus, and whether the thoracic disc is double or single. He recognized 33 genera and 93 species. There are now 35 genera and 156 species in the family (Eschmeyer & Fricke, 2009).

A small specimen of an unidentified clingfish was collected in 2 m depth at Raha Bay (16°57'N, 54°49'E) on the southeastern coast of Oman in 1993, and a color photograph was taken by the second author. No additional specimens are known. The specimen has 3 instead of 3 1/2 gill arches, the gill membranes attached to the isthmus, and it has a double thoracic disc; therefore it is classified in the subfamily Aspasmineae. It is distinct from the genera of this subfamily, as defined by Briggs (1955). We describe it here as a new genus and species.

Materials and methods

The following measurements were taken of the holotype with digital calipers and recorded to the nearest 0.01 mm (Table 1): standard length (SL) from the median anterior end of the upper lip to the posterior end of the hypural plate (base of caudal fin); body depth from the origin of pelvic fins, and body width from the origin of the pectoral fins; head length (HL) was taken from the upper lip to the posterior end of the opercular membrane; orbit diameter is the greatest fleshy diameter, and the interorbital width the least bony width; snout