



A new species of *Chaunax* (Lophiiformes: Chaunacidae) from the western South Pacific, with comment on *C. latipunctatus*

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Abstract

A new species of anglerfish, *Chaunax nudiventer*, is described on the basis of 35 specimens from the western South Pacific Ocean. It is characterized by large spots on the dorsal surface; a largely naked area on abdomen; a relatively short head and long tail, both reflected in the elongated body; slender and simple spines on body surface; numerous broad flaps on lateral side of body; and higher number of lateral line neuromasts: mainly 41–43 in lateral line proper, 4 in the upper peropercular series, and 16–17 in the pectoral series. Comments on a similar species, *C. latipunctatus* from the eastern South Pacific Ocean, is provided.

Key words: Taxonomy, anglerfish, *Chaunax nudiventer* n. sp., *Chaunax latipunctatus*, South Pacific Ocean

Introduction

The anglerfish genus *Chaunax* Lowe, 1846 currently comprises 12 valid species. Le Danois (1979) reviewed the family, recognizing one genus with six valid species, and described a new subspecies. Subsequent to her review, three additional species were described: *Chaunax latipunctatus* Le Danois, 1984, *C. tosaensis* Okamura and Oryu, 1984 (= *C. penicillatus* McCulloch, 1915), and *C. suttkusi* Caruso, 1989. Description of the last species was included in Caruso's (1989) review of the Atlantic chaunacids.

Over the past three decades, the Fisheries Agency of Japan conducted numerous fishery surveys of the tropical Pacific on which many deep-sea fishes were collected. The specimens from those surveys were deposited at Far Seas Fisheries Institute for about 30 years. Recently, those specimens were transferred to the National Science Museum, Tokyo (NSMT, now National Museum of Nature and Science) and made available to researchers (K. Matsuura, personal communication, 2009). Our examination of the Chaunacidae revealed five specimens collected from Fijian seamounts representing an undescribed *Chaunax* species. Thirty additional specimens from the New Caledonia region representing the same new species were found in the NMNZ and MNHN collections.

The new species is part of the newly established “*C. abei* species group”, that is characterized by three spines on each side of the lateral line neuromasts (Fig. 1A–B), spots on the dorsal surface, no filaments on the dorsal surface of head, and flap-like cirri on anterior and lateral body margins. The *C. abei* species group now includes, in addition to *C. nudiventer* sp. nov., *C. abei*, *C. breviradius*, *C. latipunctatus* and *C. suttkusi*, which were originally placed in the *C. fimbriatus* species group by Caruso (1989).

The new species described here differs from its congeners in having numerous large spots on the dorsal surface, a large naked area on the abdomen, a relatively slender body, and relatively high lateral line neuromast counts. Comments on a similar species, *C. latipunctatus*, based on specimens newly collected from near the type locality are provided.