



A review of the blennioid fish family Tripterygiidae (Perciformes) in the Red Sea, with description of *Enneapterygius qirmiz*, and reinstatement of *Enneapterygius altipinnis* Clark, 1980

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Abstract

The fishes of the blennioid family Tripterygiidae of the Red Sea are reviewed. Twelve species are recognised: *Norfolkia brachylepis*, *Helcogramma obtusirostris*, *H. steinitzi* and nine species of *Enneapterygius*. *Enneapterygius qirmiz* **sp. nov.** is described for a species originally described, but not named, by Clark (1980), of which the specimens on which she had based her description had become lost. Clark's (1980) *Enneapterygius altipinnis* is re-instated as a valid species, and its inclusion as one of a complex of several species is discussed. *Enneapterygius ventermaculus* reported as first record for the Red Sea. Detailed colour descriptions are given for all species, including their colour underwater where possible, as many of the species are cryptic and difficult to identify.

Key words: Red Sea, Tripterygiidae, *Enneapterygius altipinnis*, *Enneapterygius qirmiz* **sp. nov.**

Introduction

The colour patterns of many fish species are described from specimens 'out of water'. This can raise several problems: some specimens loose colour quite fast; some species change colour when under stress; water selectively filters out longer wavelengths of light, and, while some species may seem very 'obvious' out of water, their colour patterns render them cryptic under water. This last is particularly so of small species such as Tripterygiidae, many of which are semi-translucent, and the authors experienced some difficulty identifying species of the family that had been photographed in the Red Sea. One of the purposes of this review is to provide both colour descriptions and photographs of Red Sea tripterygiid species both 'out of the water' and underwater, where these are available. There is also considerable variation in colour in many species of tripterygiids. Males and females of most species have different colour patterns, and more intense colours of some males being a mark of sexual maturity / reproductive activity (e.g. Wirtz, 1978; Clements, 2006).

The first tripterygiid was described from the Mediterranean Sea, *Blennius tripteronotus* (Risso, 1810) and *Tripterygion nasus* (Risso 1827), giving the family its name. The first tripterygiid from the Red Sea, *Enneapterygius pusillus*, was described shortly thereafter, by Rüppell in 1835. However, by 1980, when Clark reviewed the family in the Red Sea, only one further species, *Enneapterygius abeli* Klausewitz 1960, had been described. Clark described and named eight new species and listed two more, but without names as the types had become lost.

In 1982 Holleman described two new species of *Enneapterygius* from the Western Indian Ocean, one of them being Clark's unnamed sp.2. Holleman (1991) revised *Norfolkia* and synonymised Clark's *Norfolkia springeri* with *N. brachylepis*. Randall (1995) reviewed the tripterygiids of the Gulf of Oman, described two new species of *Enneapterygius* and extended the range of *E. ventermaculus* from the NW coast of India to the Gulf.

In a review of the *Enneapterygius* species of the Western Indian Ocean the first author identified colour photographs of a tripterygiid from the Red Sea made by Hackenberg (Debelius, 1998: 174) as *E. obscurus* (Holleman, 2005). Another photograph of the species, also taken by Hackenberg, was reproduced in Lieske & Myers (2004: 177). Subsequent photographs of the species made by the second author show the identification to be incorrect and