



Descriptions of four new species of *Thysanophrys* (Scorpaeniformes: Platycephalidae) from the Western Indian Ocean

LESLIE W. KNAPP

Division of Fishes, National Museum of Natural History, MRC 534, Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 37012, Washington D.C. 20013-7012, USA. Email: knappl@si.edu

Abstract

Four new species of *Thysanophrys* are described from the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). *T. rarita*, known from a single specimen taken off Somalia, is provisionally placed in *Thysanophrys* and is distinguished by its color pattern and number of preocular and suborbital spines. *T. tricaudata* is described from three specimens taken at SCUBA stations off southwestern Sri Lanka. They differ from other western Indian Ocean (WIO) *Thysanophrys* in color pattern, lack of ocular flaps, number of dorsal fin spines and scale counts. The remaining two new species are somewhat similar to the widespread Indo-Pacific species, *T. chiltonae* Schultz (1966). *T. randalli* is described from specimens taken at the Amirante Islands and Mauritius. It may also be widespread in the Indo-Pacific, but differs from *T. chiltonae* in nasal spine structure, color pattern, type of iris lappet margin, and in having a much shorter maximum size. *T. springeri* also appears to be a smaller species than *T. chiltonae* and, aside from one record off Djibouti, is restricted to Red Sea. It also differs from *T. chiltonae* in color pattern, in having fewer pectoral rays and fewer scale rows between the second dorsal-fin insertion and the lateral line. Although *T. chiltonae* is relatively common in the northern Indian Ocean, it does not appear to have entered the Red Sea.

Key words: *Thysanophrys randalli* sp. nov., *T. rarita* sp. nov., *T. springeri* sp. nov., *T. tricaudata* sp. nov., *T. chiltonae*, Platycephalidae, western Indian Ocean

Introduction

Thysanophrys chiltonae Schultz (1966) was described from collections taken primarily at the Marshall and Mariana Islands in 1946–47. It is a common and wide-ranging species of flathead that is found at lagoon reefs from the western Indian Ocean to Japan, and at many Pacific Ocean islands as far east as the Marquesas. It is frequently taken by rotenone at depths of 20 m or less with perhaps a maximum SCUBA depth record of 54 m, reported by Randall (1995). Occasional specimens have been taken by trawling at about 70–100 m. In the Indian Ocean, the species is found off western Australia and seems to be common from the Andaman Islands to the Gulf of Oman. It appears to be absent from the Red Sea. Further south along the African coast, it is less common and appears only sporadically, with a few specimens taken at the Comores, Madagascar, Mauritius and in Durban harbor. Although *Thysanophrys* specimens from the Red Sea are quite similar to *T. chiltonae* in general appearance, they are markedly shorter and exhibit differences in meristic characters and color pattern, which form the basis for the description of *T. springeri*. A second new flathead, *T. randalli*, is described here from Mauritius and the Amirante Islands of the Seychelles. It differs from *T. chiltonae* in its smaller size, the shape of the nasal spines and in color pattern. Specimens from the Pacific listed below are also tentatively identified as *T. randalli*. A third new species, *T. tricaudata*, is described from three specimens taken off Sri Lanka. They seemed close to a Philippine specimen described as *Cymbacephalus armatus* by Fowler (1938) and which was subsequently placed in the genus *Thysanophrys* by Imamura (1996). Further examination has revealed that the Sri Lankan specimens differ from *T. armata* and other western Indian Ocean *Thysanophrys* in color pattern, lack of ocular flaps and fin ray counts. A fourth new species, *T. rarita*, is described from a single specimen collected off Somalia. *T. papillaris* Imamura &