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Two new species of the batfish genus *Malthopsis* (Lophiiformes: Ogcocephalidae) from the Western Indian Ocean

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Abstract

Two new species of the triangular batfishes, genus *Malthopsis*, are described from the western Indian Ocean. Both belong to a species group with minute prickles on the ventral surface. *Malthopsis bradburyae* n. sp. differs from its congeners by having the body covered by blunt, flat bucklers; subopercular buckler dull, without well-developed spines, its ventral surface covered by minute prickles and a few large bucklers anterior to the pelvic-fin base; rostrum moderately long, directed forward rather than upward; eye relatively small. *Malthopsis austraficana* n. sp. differs from its congeners by having a long forward and horizontally directed rostrum; subopercular bucklers dull, without well-developed spines; ventral surface evenly covered by minute prickles and small bucklers; small black patches on dorsal surface; and a strong tail. Comments and a key to the Western Indian Ocean species of *Malthopsis* are provided.

Key words: Teleostei, taxonomy, new species, Western Indian Ocean

Introduction

The batfish genus *Malthopsis* is characterized by having a remarkably triangular body disk; a pointed rostral spine; body scales in the form of bucklers; the subopercle with a large triangular buckler, with or without well-developed spines. The genus comprises 11 valid species, including *M. lutea* Alcock 1891 (type species), *M. mitrigeria* Gilbert & Cramer 1897, *M. tiarella* Jordan 1902, *M. jordani* Gilbert 1905, *M. annulifera* Tanaka 1908, *M. kobayashii* Tanaka 1916, *M. gnoma* Bradbury 1998, *M. retifera* Ho Prokofiev & Shao 2009, *M. gigas* Ho & Shao 2010, *M. asperata* Ho, Roberts & Shao 2013, and *M. parva* Ho, Roberts & Shao 2013.

Bradbury (*in* Smith & Heemstra 1986) recorded three species, *M. lutea*, *M. mitrigeria* and *M. tiarella*, from the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). Ho *et al.* (2009) described *M. retifera* from Somalia. Ho & Shao (2010a) described *M. gigas* from the Indo-west Pacific Ocean, including the WIO. Lloyd (1909) and Bradbury (2003) mentioned that the type series of *M. lutea* comprised more than one species and that at least some specimens were misidentifications of *M. mitrigeria*. Ho and Shao (2010b) examined two syntypes of *M. lutea* in the BMNH, designated as lectotype the specimen that possibly was illustrated, and provided diagnostic characters for the species. A generic revision is in preparation by this author.

During the International Indian Ocean Expedition, the vessel *ANTON BRUUN* collected nine specimens of *Malthopsis* from off Tanzania at a depth of 100 m in 1964. The specimens have very unique blunt, flat bucklers and other distinctive characters suggesting that they represented an undescribed species. In addition, specimens previously identified as *M. tiarella* by Bradbury (*in* Smith & Heemstra 1986), plus many recently collected specimens, are recognized as another, undescribed species. Both species are described herein.