



***Sunagocia omanensis*, a new flathead fish (Scorpaeniformes, Platycephalidae)
from the Western Indian Ocean, with comments on the distribution of
*Sunagocia carbuncula***

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Abstract

A new species of Platycephalidae having a weak development of sensory tubules on the cheek is placed in the genus *Sunagocia* Imamura. The description is based on two specimens taken at the Kuria Muria Ids., Oman. The new species may be distinguished from its congeners by having three preocular spines, ethmoid spines forming a rosette on mid-line with 5–6 tips coming from a common base, and a body coloration of tan with dark saddles reaching to lower sides. It is also characterized by having numerous small serrations along the supraorbital and suborbital ridges and sixgill rakers. A section concerning the status and range of *Sunagocia carbuncula* Valenciennes in the western Indian Ocean is also included. A key separating the species of *Sunagocia* appears below.

Key words: *Sunagocia omanensis* sp. nov., *Sunagocia carbuncula*, Oman

Introduction

With the new species described here, the genus *Sunagocia* Imamura 2003 currently includes five species. Two of these, *S. arenicola* (Schultz 1966) and *S. otaitensis* (Cuvier ex Parkinson & Solander) in Cuvier & Valenciennes 1829 are often found in relatively shallow depths around coral reefs and have wide distributions across much of the Indo Pacific. *S. sainsburyi* Knapp and Imamura 2004 was described from two specimens taken by trawl, one at depths of 20–22 m. (near Darwin), the other at 73–74 m. (near Port Hedland). The two specimens of *S. omanensis* described here were from off Sawda I., Oman and taken using SCUBA at a depth of 21 m. Although *S. carbuncula* (Valenciennes in Cuvier & Valenciennes 1833) was originally described from the western Indian Ocean, it does not appear to have been collected there in recent times.

Comments on the distribution of *Sunagocia carbuncula*. The holotype of *Platycephalus carbunculus* Valenciennes 1833 was reportedly collected by Dussumier from the Bombay area. Examination of that specimen reveals a row of papillae on the upper eye, the middle one elongate, 12 anal rays and agrees in counts and measurements with specimens of *S. carbunculus* from Malaysia. The report by Murty (1982) of *Thysanophrys carbunculus* being present in Palk Bay and other areas of the Bay of Bengal mentions a single papilla on the upper eye and 13 anal rays so at least some of his specimens were probably *T. celebica*. He also mentions the scarcity of authentic records for *T. cantori* in India, a species name regarded as a junior synonym of *S. carbunculus* by Knapp and Imamura (1997). Listings of *Platycephalus carbunculus* by Day (1876) and *Suggrundus carbunculus* by Munroe ((1955) may have been based on the original description by Valenciennes. Extensive collecting in the western Indian Ocean in more recent times has apparently failed to obtain any specimens of *Sunagocia carbuncula*, so the type locality of Bombay cited by Valenciennes may have been in error.

Methods

Counts and measurements were taken according to Carpenter (1999) and Knapp (1999). Terminology of head spines