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A new species of the sandperch genus *Parapercis* from the western Indian Ocean (Perciformes: Pinguipedidae)

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Abstract

Parapercis albiventer sp. nov., a new species of sandperch is described based on 12 specimens collected from the western Indian Ocean. It can be distinguished from congeners by having a bright white ventral surface, without color markings on lower fourth of body; dorsal surface of head and body densely covered by small brown spots; a row of 10 faint reddish blotches on a paler background, along body axis; row of 10 deep reddish blotches, the lower part of each blotch with a solid black bar ventrally, below mid-lateral body axis; and combination of following characters: no palatine teeth; snout long; eye small; interorbital space broad; dorsal-fin rays V, 21; anal-fin rays I, 17; pectoral-fin rays 16–17; pored lateral-line scales 55–59; predorsal scales 9 or 10; scales on transverse row 6/17–21; 3 pairs of canine teeth at front of lower jaw; and vertebrae 10 + 20 = 30.

Key words: Pinguipedidae, *Parapercis albiventer*, new species, South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique

Introduction

In recent decades, many new “cryptic” species sharing similar morphology or coloration in different species-complexes of the sandperch genus *Parapercis* Bleeker, 1863 have been described from throughout the Indo-west Pacific region (Randall & Francis, 1993; Randall, 2008; Johnson, 2006; Imamura & Yoshino, 2007; Randall *et al.*, 2008; Liao *et al.*, 2011; Ho & Shao, 2010; Ho & Johnson, 2013; Ho *et al.*, 2012; Sparks & Baldwin, 2012; Allen & Erdmann, 2012; Johnson & White, 2012). The current number of valid species in *Parapercis* is 77; of these, 31 species were described in the last 10 years (Eschmeyer & Fong, 2013; Ho, pers. obs.). The trend in describing new species shows no sign of decreasing.

Bleeker (1849) described *Parapercis xanthozona* based on 10 specimens collected from Indonesia. Subsequently, this species was recorded from throughout the Indo-west Pacific region (Heemstra, 1986; Randall, 2001; Imamura & Matsuura, 2003). However, Heemstra (1986) pointed out the uncertainty of the identification of the western Indian Ocean population and later went further to recognize it as an underscribed species. Imamura & Matsuura (2003) stated that “... we determined that Heemstra’s specimens, reported as *P. xanthozona*, represent an underscribed species; the senior author and P. C. Heemstra (RUSI) intend to describe this as a new species separately.” Randall (2001: 3510) also commented on this treatment of *P. xanthozona*, noting that there are “... two records from East Africa (Zanzibar and Natal). The East African form is a little different in colour and warrants further investigation.”

Two specimens collected from Madagascar were found by the first author when visiting the fish collection of the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle (MNHN). These two specimens, with similar fin formulae, scale counts and appearance, were formerly recognized as *P. xanthozona*. However, because of its different coloration and slightly fewer pored lateral-line scales, the first author made direct comparisons with western Pacific *P. xanthozona* and found it to be a different species.



FIGURE 5. A. *Parapercis punctulata*, 109 mm SL, Seychelles, photo by P. C. Heemstra. B. *Parapercis tetracantha*, QM 38538, 150 mm SL, Nan-fang-ao, Taiwan, photo by H.-C. Ho.

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