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***Saurida lessepsianus* a new species of lizardfish (Pisces: Synodontidae) from the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, with a key to *Saurida* species in the Red Sea**

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Abstract

Saurida lessepsianus n. sp., a lizardfish (Aulopiformes: Synodontidae) from the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, previously misidentified as *S. undosquamis* (Richardson) and more recently as *S. macrolepis* Tanaka, is described as a new species. It is characterised by the following combination of characters: dorsal fin with 11–12 rays; pectoral fins with 13–15 rays; lateral-line scales 47–51; transverse scale rows above lateral line 4½, below lateral line 5½; pectoral fins moderately long (extending to between just before or just beyond a line from origin of pelvic fins to origin of dorsal fin); 2 rows of teeth on outer palatines; 0–2 teeth on vomer; tongue with 3–6 rows of teeth posteriorly; caudal peduncle slightly compressed (depth a little more than width); upper margin of caudal fin with row of 3–8 (usually 6 or 7) small black spots; stomach pale grey to blackish anteriorly; intestine whitish. The species is common in the Red Sea and as a result of Lessepsian migration through the Suez Canal, it is now widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean. The taxonomic status of two other Red Sea nominal species, *Saurus badimottah* Rüppell [= *Saurida tumbil* (Bloch)] and *Saurida sinaitica* Dollfus in Gruvel (a *nomen nudum*), is clarified. A key is provided for the species of *Saurida* in the Red Sea.

Key words: Synodontidae, *Saurida*, new species, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Lessepsian immigration

Introduction

Lizardfishes of the genus *Saurida* Valenciennes in Cuvier & Valenciennes 1850, are common fishes of Indo-West Pacific continental shelves. Currently about 22 species are recognised world-wide, five of which occur in the Red Sea (Bogorodsky *et al.* 2014). A single species, recorded from the Red Sea as *Saurida undosquamis* (Richardson 1848) or *S. macrolepis* Tanaka 1917, has successfully migrated through the Suez Canal (Lessepsian migration) and is now widespread and abundant throughout the eastern Mediterranean Sea, where it has established large populations and constitutes a significant component of the local trawl fishery (Golani 1993; Golani & Ben-Tuvia 1995; Gökçe *et al.* 2007).

Recent work, however, has cast doubt on the identity of this species. Inoue & Nakabo (2006) showed the name *Saurida undosquamis* has been applied to a complex of species which they called the “*S. undosquamis* group”. They recognised four Indo-West Pacific species (*S. longimanus* Norman 1939, *S. macrolepis*, *S. umeyoshii* Inoue & Nakabo 2006, and *S. undosquamis*) in the *S. undosquamis* group, all characterised by having dark spots on the upper margin of the caudal fin, pectoral fins extending beyond origin of pelvic fins, anterior rays of dorsal fin not elongate or filamentous, and predorsal length greater than distance between dorsal-fin and adipose-fin origins (Inoue & Nakabo 2006).

Saurida macrolepis, tentatively synonymised with *S. undosquamis* by Norman (1935), was regarded as distinct by Inoue & Nakabo (2006), who also applied the name *S. macrolepis* to the species previously reported as *S. undosquamis* in the Western Indian Ocean. Inoue & Nakabo (2006) considered *S. macrolepis* to be a wide-ranging, geographically variable species, occurring in the Western Pacific from southern Japan to Australia, and in the Indian Ocean westwards to East Africa, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.