

Occurrence of *Scorpaenopsis venosa*
(Scorpaeniformes: Scorpaenidae) on the Saya de
Malha Bank, Indian Ocean

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Occurrence of *Scorpaenopsis venosa* (Scorpaeniformes: Scorpaenidae) on the Saya de Malha Bank, Indian Ocean

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A single specimen of the scorpionfish genus *Scorpaenopsis*, collected from the Saya de Malha Bank (10°23'–33' S, 61°32'–40' E), western central Indian Ocean, at a depth of 76–95 m during a bottom trawl operated by the Japan Marine Fishery Resources Research Center (JAMARC) on 9 October 1977, was found in the collection of the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology (formerly Tokyo University of Fisheries). This specimen (Fig. 1), registered as MTUF-P 24011 and measuring 126.5 mm standard length, is here identified as *Scorpaenopsis venosa* (Cuvier in Cuvier and Valenciennes, 1829) on the basis of the following characters: 12 dorsal spines; 17 pectoral fin rays on each side; no palatine teeth; wide interorbital space (6.8 in head length); occipital pit deep, quadrangular, its front edge straight and strongly angular. In addition to the diagnoses, characters of the present specimen include 22 pored lateral line scales; 54 longitudinal scale rows; 5 + 11 gill rakers; approximately one-half of eye extending above dorsal profile of head; interorbital ridges prominent, originating between posterior nostrils and extending to anterior edge of occipital pit; median interorbital ridge well developed, originating between posterior nostrils and extending to center of interorbital space; supraocular tentacle absent; no extra spine anterior to each tympanic spine; no coronal spines; parietal and nuchal spines of approximately equal size, joined at base and in line with tympanic spines; sphenotic with 3 small spines; lower posttemporal spine larger than upper spine; lacrimal ridge without a pointed tip; anterior lacrimal spine simple, horizontal, its tip reaching to dorsal margin of upper lip; posterior lacrimal spine broad, angling ventroposteriorly, associated with a long fimbriate flap and linked posteriorly to head with fringed skin; suborbital ridge with 4 spines; preopercle with 5 spines; upper opercular spine with 2 points in left side (simple in right side); space between opercular spines without ridges. Proportional measurements as percentages of standard length of the specimen are given in Table 1. These characters were also consistent with those of *S. venosa* given by Randall and Eschmeyer (2002), with the exception of the following counts: 54 longitudinal scale rows (vs. 47–52 in the latter) and 11 gill rakers (included a raker at the angle) on the lower limb (vs. 8–10). The small differences in counts may simply reflect individual variation. Fur-

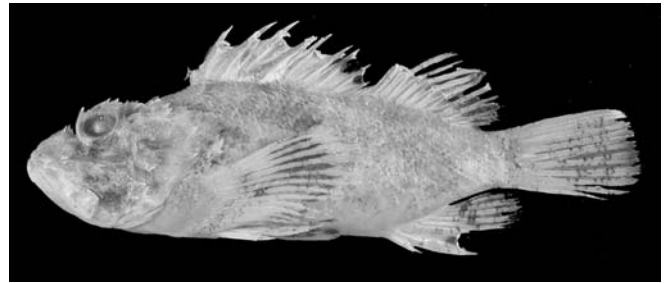


Fig. 1. *Scorpaenopsis venosa*, MTUF-P 24011, 126.5 mm standard length, Saya de Malha Bank, western central Indian Ocean, 76–95 m depth

Table 1. Proportional measurements of *Scorpaenopsis venosa*, expressed as percentages of standard length

| | MTUF-P24011 |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Standard L (mm) | 126.5 |
| Body depth | 31.9 |
| Body width | 23.2 |
| Head L | 41.2 |
| Snout L | 13.4 |
| Orbit diameter | 9.0 |
| Interorbital width | 6.1 |
| Upper jaw L | 21.3 |
| Postorbital L | 20.2 |
| Predorsal L | 35.8 |
| Preanal L | 76.4 |
| Prepelvic L | 41.5 |
| 1st dorsal spine L | 7.7 |
| 2nd dorsal spine L | 13.8 |
| 3rd dorsal spine L | 19.1 |
| 11th dorsal spine L | 6.7 |
| 12th dorsal spine L | Broken |
| 1st anal spine L | 10.2 |
| 2nd anal spine L | 20.6 |
| 3rd anal spine L | 16.4 |
| Pectoral fin L | 32.4 |
| Pelvic spine L | 15.3 |
| Caudal fin L | 28.9 |
| Caudal peduncle L | 15.6 |
| Caudal peduncle depth | 12.0 |

Length expressed as L

thermore, the upper opercular spine tip in left side of the specimen is divided into 2 (simple in right side), although the spine of *S. venosa* is invariably simple (Randall and Eschmeyer, 2002). It is considered that the divided upper opercular spine in the present specimen is the result of a genetic or ontogenetic defect.

Scorpaenopsis venosa was recently redescribed by Randall and Eschmeyer (2002) on examination of 55 specimens from the Indo-West Pacific, ranging from the east coast of South Africa to Queensland, Australia. The specimens were examined from depths of less than 2 m to 72 m, with the majority from shallower than 25 m. Although considered common in the western Pacific Ocean, in the western Indian Ocean this species has so far been reported from only three localities, the northwest (20°23' N, 70°08' E) and southwest (Kovalam, Kerala) coasts of India, and off Durban Harbor, South Africa (Day, 1868; Gilchrist and Thompson, 1909; Randall and Eschmeyer, 2002). Furthermore, although the species has to date been known only from continental shelf localities and islands near the continents (Randall and Eschmeyer, 2002), the present specimen was collected from the western central Indian Ocean, which is approximately 1800 km away from the nearest continental shelf. Accordingly, the present specimen collected from the Saya de Malha Bank at the depth of 76–95 m represents the first reliable record from outside the continental shelf and the deepest capture record for the species. Further speci-

mens from the region are required to assess the occurrence and biological aspects of *S. venosa*.

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