

**FIRST RECORD OF A SCORPIONFISH (SCORPAENIDAE),
SCORPAENOPSIS RAMARAOI, FROM NEW CALEDONIA**

by

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RÉSUMÉ. - Premier signalement d'un poisson-scorpion (Scorpaenidae), *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi*, de Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Un spécimen de *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi* Randall & Eschmeyer, 2001, récolté en Nouvelle-Calédonie, représente le premier signalement de cette espèce dans la région néo-calédonienne qui constitue l'extension la plus méridionale et la plus orientale de l'espèce. De plus, le spécimen néo-calédonien mesurant 165,2 mm LS est le plus grand des spécimens récoltés à ce jour. Les variations morphologiques entre le spécimen néo-calédonien et les spécimens des autres localités de son aire de distribution sont discutées.

Key words. - Scorpaenidae - *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi* - ISE - New Caledonia - First record.

The Indo-Pacific scorpionfish genus *Scorpaenopsis* was revised taxonomically by Randall and Eschmeyer (2001) who recognized 24 valid species, eight of them new. The latter included *S. ramaraoi*, described on the basis of 94 specimens from the Indo-Pacific where the species ranges from Pakistan to Taiwan and New Britain.

A single large specimen (165.2 mm in standard length) of *Scorpaenopsis*, collected from New Caledonia and subsequently identified as *S. ramaraoi* Randall & Eschmeyer, 2001, represents the first reliable record from that region (also the southernmost and easternmost records for the species) and the largest recorded size for the species.

Counts and measurements follow Eschmeyer (1969) and Randall and Eschmeyer (2001). Standard length is expressed as

SL. Institutional codes follow Leviton *et al.* (1985) with an additional institutional abbreviation as follows: Division of Fisheries Sciences, Miyazaki University, Japan (MUFS).

SCORPAENOPSIS RAMARAOI

(Fig. 1)

Material examined

MUFS 14191, 165.2 mm SL, Citrons Bay, Nouméa, New Caledonia, coral reef, 0.6 m, hand net, 6 Nov. 1997, collected by H. Motomura.

Description

Dorsal fin rays XII, 9; anal fin rays III, 5; pectoral fin rays 18 on each side; longitudinal scale series 47; lateral line scales 24; gill rakers 5 (upper limb) + 9 (lower limb including a raker at angle). Proportional measurements of the specimen are given as percentages of SL. Body depth 38.3; body width 28.8; head length 44.1; snout length 13.4; orbit diameter 7.6; interorbital width 6.1; upper jaw length 21.2; postorbital length 24.1; predorsal fin length 36.9; preanal fin length 75.8; prepelvic fin length 41.2; first dorsal spine length 3.9; second dorsal spine length 8.5; longest dorsal spine length 12.7 (fifth spine); eleventh dorsal spine length 5.9; twelfth dorsal spine length 11.3; longest dorsal ray length 18.0 (third ray); first anal spine length 7.9; second anal spine length 18.5; third anal

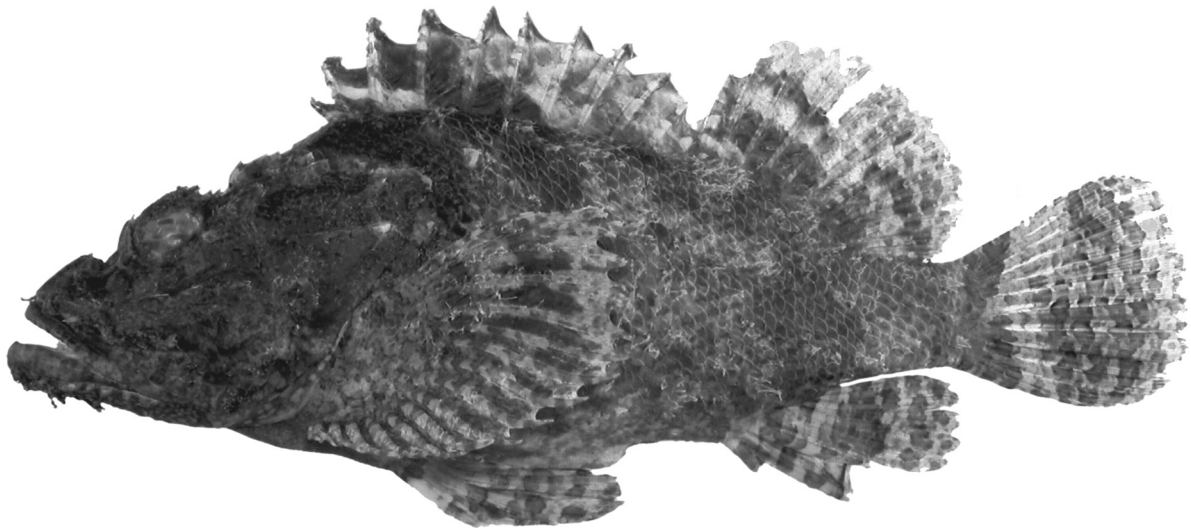


Figure 1. - *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi*, MUFS 14191, 165.2 mm SL, Nouméa, New Caledonia.

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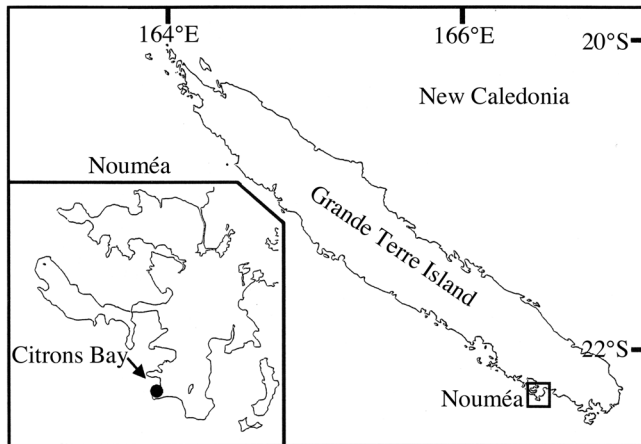


Figure 2. - Map of New Caledonia showing the capture locality.

spine length 16.1; longest anal ray length 22.1 (first ray); pectoral fin length 28.9; pelvic spine length 11.9; longest pelvic ray length 23.8 (second ray); caudal fin length 27.1; caudal peduncle length 15.6; caudal peduncle depth 11.6; jaws with a band of teeth in approximately 7 rows at front of upper jaw and approximately 6 in lower jaw; a distinct median interorbital ridge present; no extra spine anterior to each tympanic spine; occipital pit shallow, not quadrangular; ridge above anterior lacrimal spine with a pointed tip; upper opercular spine single, narrow and without a median ridge; space between opercular spines without ridges; supraocular tentacle well developed.

Remarks

A specimen collected from New Caledonia (Fig. 2) was identified as *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi* on the basis of the above characters. *Scorpaenopsis ramaraoi* is similar in overall body appearance to *S. possi* Randall & Eschmeyer, 2001, which is widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific, but the two species can usually be distinguished from each other by an extra spine anterior to each tympanic spine (absent in the former and present in the latter; Randall and Eschmeyer, 2001). According to Randall and Eschmeyer (2001), however, *S. possi* from Fiji, New Caledonia, Chesterfield Islands and One Tree Island, lacks an extra spine anterior to each tympanic spine, on which basis they regarded it as a southern

population of the species. Although the present New Caledonian specimen of *S. ramaraoi* and the southern population of *S. possi* both lack the extra spine, the former differed from the latter in having 18 pectoral fin rays (17 or 18, but strong modal count of 17 in the latter), a slightly shorter snout (3.28 in head length vs. 2.95-3.2), shorter second dorsal spine length (5.16 in head length vs. 2.5-3.25) and a well-developed supraocular tentacle (vs. absent or very small; see Randall and Eschmeyer, 2001). These characters, except for second dorsal spine length, of the New Caledonian specimen are well consistent with those of *S. ramaraoi* given by Randall and Eschmeyer (2001). Notwithstanding, the first (11.20 in head length), second (5.16) and longest (fifth, 3.47) dorsal spines in *S. ramaraoi* from New Caledonia were shorter than those in *S. ramaraoi* from other localities [mean 7.6 (range 7.0-7.9) in head length, 3.9 (3.3-3.9) and 2.8 (fourth or fifth, 2.35-2.9), respectively; Randall and Eschmeyer, 2001]. It is considered that these small differences in spine lengths represent geographical variation or morphological change with growth.

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