

***Scorpaena bulacephala*, a new species of scorpionfish (Scorpaeniformes: Scorpaenidae) from the northern Tasman Sea**

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Abstract

A new species of small-sized scorpionfish, *Scorpaena bulacephala*, is described on the basis of seven specimens collected from off Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands, northern Tasman Sea, southwestern Pacific Ocean, at depths of 86–113 m. The new species is closely related to a Hawaiian endemic species, *S. colorata*. The two species are distinguished from other Indo-Pacific species of *Scorpaena* by the following combination of characters: exposed cycloid scales covering the anteroventral surface of the body and pectoral-fin base, the lateral surface of the lacrimal without spines, and 17 pectoral-fin rays. The new species differs from *S. colorata* in having 39–44 longitudinal scales rows and relatively short fin spines and rays, especially short longest pectoral-fin ray (31.5–33.5% of standard length). Morphological changes with growth and sexual dimorphism of the new species are also discussed.

Key words: Scorpaenidae, *Scorpaena*, new species, Tasman Sea, southwestern Pacific Ocean

Introduction

In May–June 2003, the biodiversity of the northern Tasman Sea was surveyed by an international research team using the New Zealand FRV *Tangaroa*. This survey, known as NORFANZ, led to the collection of seven unidentified scorpionfish specimens from off Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands, at depths of 86–113 m. These specimens belong to the genus *Scorpaena* Linnaeus, 1758 whose Indo-Pacific species are characterized by 12 dorsal-fin spines, teeth on the palatines, an occipital pit, the posterior lacrimal spine directed posteroventrally, some pectoral-fin rays branched in adults, and the pored lateral-line scales continuing on to the caudal-fin base (e.g., Poss, 1999; Motomura et al., 2005),