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NOTE

New record of *Gobiopsis canalis* (Teleostei: Gobiidae) from Iraq in the Arabian Gulf

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The Checkered Goby of the northwest Indian Ocean, *Gobiopsis canalis* Lachner & McKinney, 1978, is a little known member of the Gobiidae with very few known specimens (Randall 1995). The genus *Gobiopsis* Steindachner, 1861 is limited to the Indo-Pacific region (Shibukawa 2010), found both in tropical and temperate regions (Larson 2011) and composed mostly of small species that favor shallow brackish and coastal waters. In the first revision of this genus, by Lachner & McKinney (1978), 10 species were included. Subsequently, Lachner & McKinney (1979) added three species to this list, but considered them as “*Gobiopsis sensu lato*” while the earlier 10 species were designated “*Gobiopsis sensu stricto*”.

The distribution of *G. canalis* is confined to the northwestern Indian Ocean, from the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. This species was described from only two specimens, the holotype (ZMUC P781424), trawled from 13 m from off Hendarubi Island, Iran (26.6839°, 53.7667°), and originally identified as “*Barbatogobius asanai*” by Blegvad & Løppenthin (1944) (presently *Gobiopsis macrostomus* Steindachner, 1861). The single paratype in the description, CAS 40079 from the Arabian Sea, was from Kozhikode, India, collected by A.W. Herre in 1941. No additional specimens were reported until 1979, when a specimen was collected off Karachi, Pakistan (ROM 74390). Several more specimens have been collected by John Randall from the coast of Oman.

We report a specimen collected from the northern Arabian Gulf in Iraqi waters, a range extension of about 600 km north from the type location. The specimen was collected by trawl net in the northern end of the Arabian Gulf off Iraq, at 29.7258°, 48.8261°, at a depth of about 50–60 m and is deposited as MSC 201 in the Marine Science Centre, University of Basrah, Iraq fish collection (Fig. 1). The specimen is 73 mm SL (87 mm TL), larger than the 61 mm SL holotype and the maximum of 63 mm SL in the remaining museum specimens.

The specimen is identified as *Gobiopsis canalis* by D- VI, I,10 A- I,9; 22 pectoral-fin rays; 17 caudal-fin segmented rays. Morphometrics (measurements following Hubbs & Lagler [1958]) include an elongated robust body (body width 5.7 in SL), deeper anteriorly (depth 7.2 in SL); a large flattened head (31% SL), with a well-muscled wide interorbital (7% SL), blunt short snout (10% SL); and a small eye (4% SL). Teeth in rows in the lower (10–12) and upper (23–24) jaws. The cephalic sensory-canal pore system with anterior temporal (AT)

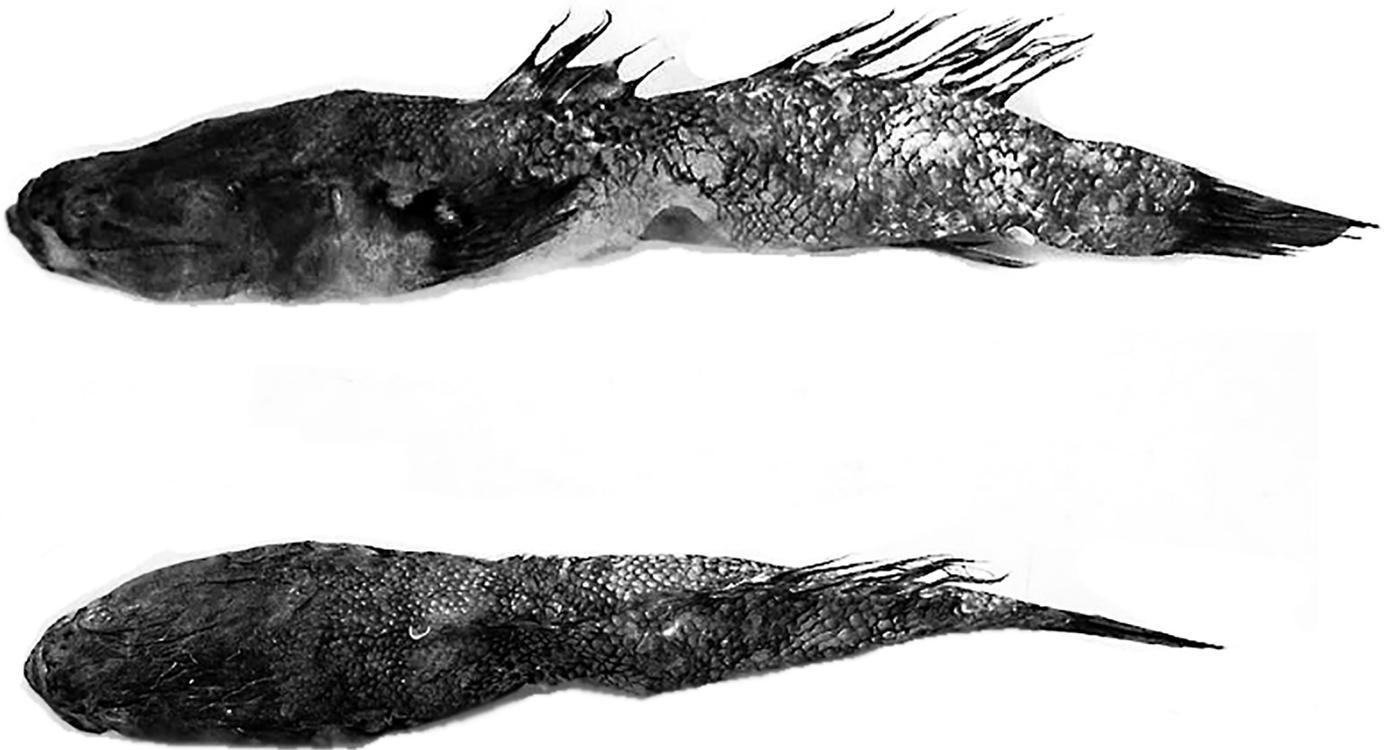


Figure 1. *Gobiopsis canalis*, 73 mm SL, MSC 210, Iraq, Arabian Gulf, lateral view above, dorsal below (Abbas J. Al-Faisal).

and posterior temporal (PT) pores; the preopercular canal reaches the lateral cephalic canal and links to it prior to the IT pore. Short barbels present on the chin, located between the nostrils and along the cheek, moderately long barbels on the anterior side of the cheek. Caudal fin rounded (although damaged). Scales mostly missing, but remaining are cycloid. Two separate dorsal fins, pre-first-dorsal length 44% SL; first-dorsal-fin base 8% SL; second-dorsal-fin base 23% SL; anal-fin base 9% SL; pectoral-fin length 19% SL; pelvic-fin length 15% SL; caudal-peduncle length 20% SL, caudal-peduncle depth 9% SL; caudal-fin length about 20% SL. The state of the trawled specimen did not allow an unambiguous determination of gender.

Most of the upper part of the body is dark grey, with two rows of large whitish spots, while the lower body grades to white (Fig. 1). Four dark saddles are present on the dorsal body and extending down as broad bars, the first saddle at the first dorsal fin, the second under the origin of the second dorsal fin, the third below the end of the second dorsal fin, and the fourth at the caudal peduncle. The head is generally darker than the body, most of the pectoral fin is dark except for no pigmentation on the lower portion of the fin base. The second dorsal fin has irregular dark blotches. The pelvic fins are white, and the anal fin generally dark. The caudal fin is darker brown with a dark blotch near the base. Note that the dusky caudal fin with a dark blotch at the base is unlike the holotype which has a relatively uniform base and irregular bars (Lachner & McKinney 1978: plate 9).

The soft-bottom, deeper-water habitat, as well as small size and burrowing shelter of this species and similar forms makes these kinds of fishes difficult to discover and collect (e.g. Murdy 2006). The absence of records of this species from Iraqi waters for the last decades could result from these issues with collection, but may also reflect climatic, hydrological, and ecological changes in the area during this period of time (Beg & Al-Ghadban 2003, Bishop et al. 2016).

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