

A New Triggerfish of the Genus *Abalistes* (Tetraodontiformes: Balistidae) from the Western Pacific

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ABSTRACT. A new species of triggerfish, *Abalistes filamentosus* is described on the basis of 17 specimens collected at depths from 61 to 180 m in Japan, the Northwest Shelf of Australia, and the Timor Sea. It differs from the congener, *A. stellatus* (Anonymous, 1798), by having filamentous upper and lower caudal-fin rays, 3–4 longitudinal grooves on the cheek, and by lacking yellow/pale blue spots and yellow reticulations on the body. The new species is not sexually dimorphic. The authorship of *Abalistes stellatus* is clarified.

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Triggerfishes of the genus *Abalistes* Jordan & Seale, 1906, are widely distributed in shallow waters in tropical and subtropical regions of the Indo-west Pacific and are commercially important in countries in southeast Asia (Matsuura, 2001). *Abalistes* is clearly separated from other members of the family Balistidae by the following combination of characters: enlarged osseous scales behind gill opening; a deep groove before eye; caudal peduncle depressed, wider than deep; first dorsal fin with 3 prominent spines; frontal greatly expanded posteriorly beyond level of posterior edge of posttemporal, forming round posterodorsal surface of cranium (Matsuura, 1979, 1980). The genus has long been considered to include only one species, *Abalistes stellatus* (Anonymous, 1798). While examining triggerfish specimens collected from the Ryukyu Islands, we found two forms of *Abalistes*: one having filamentous caudal-fin rays and 3–4 longitudinal grooves on the cheek but lacking prominent yellow/pale blue spots and yellow reticulations on the body, and the other lacking

filamentous caudal-fin rays and longitudinal grooves on the cheek, but having a colourful body with many yellow/pale blue spots and yellow reticulations. Careful examination of many *Abalistes* specimens led us to conclude that the former is a new species and the latter is *A. stellatus*. We herein describe the new species as *A. filamentosus*.

Materials and methods

The methods of counting and measuring primarily follow those of Matsuura (1980). The body width was measured between the pectoral-fin bases; the length of the middle caudal-fin ray was the distance between the caudal-fin base to the tip of middle caudal-fin ray; and, the postorbital length was measured from the upper end of the gill opening to the nearest point of the orbital edge. The pectoral-fin ray count excludes the uppermost rudimentary ray. Standard length and head length are abbreviated as SL and HL, respectively. In the following description, data in parentheses refer to

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