

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

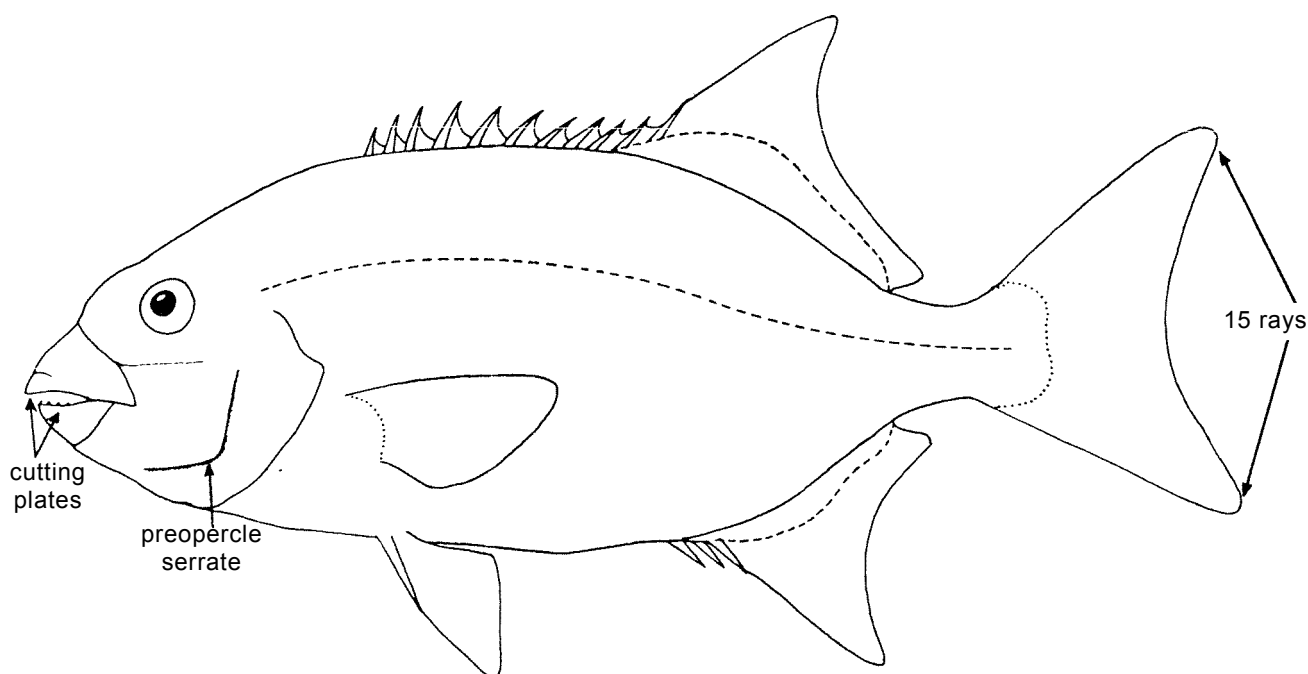
OPLEGNATHIDAE

Knifefjaws

Body oblong-oval, moderately compressed. Preopercle serrate; mouth not protrusile; maxilla partly covered by preorbital bone; teeth fused into cutting plates like the "beak" of parrotfishes (Scaridae); no teeth on vomer or palatines; gill membranes separate, free from isthmus; branchiostegal rays 7; gill arches with a slit behind the last. Dorsal fin continuous, with 11 or 12 spines and 11 to 24 soft rays; anal fin with 3 spines and 11 to 17 soft rays; caudal fin truncate or slightly emarginate, with 15 branched rays. Scales very small, ctenoid (rough); lateral line complete.

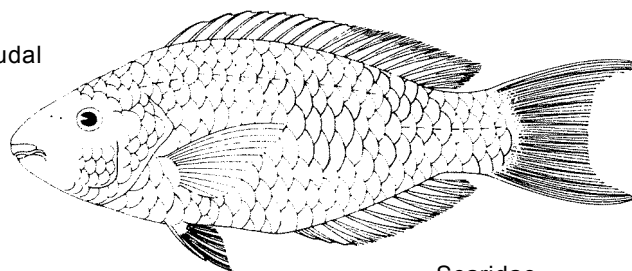
Colour: adults are usually dusky or black, while juveniles are yellow with dark bars.

Medium- to large-sized bottom-living fishes (to about 85 cm in length) inhabiting coastal waters from the shoreline to about 150 m depth, especially in the vicinity of rocky areas. Although not very important commercially, knifefjaws are regularly fished locally and are excellent foodfish.



SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Scaridae: scales large, cycloid; 11 branched caudal fin rays (15 in Oplegnathidae).



Scaridae

KEY TO GENERA OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

There is only one valid genus (Oplegnathus) in this family. "Hoplegnathus" and "Ostorhinchus" have been used for these species, but both names are incorrect.

LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Code numbers are given for those species for which Identification Sheets are included.

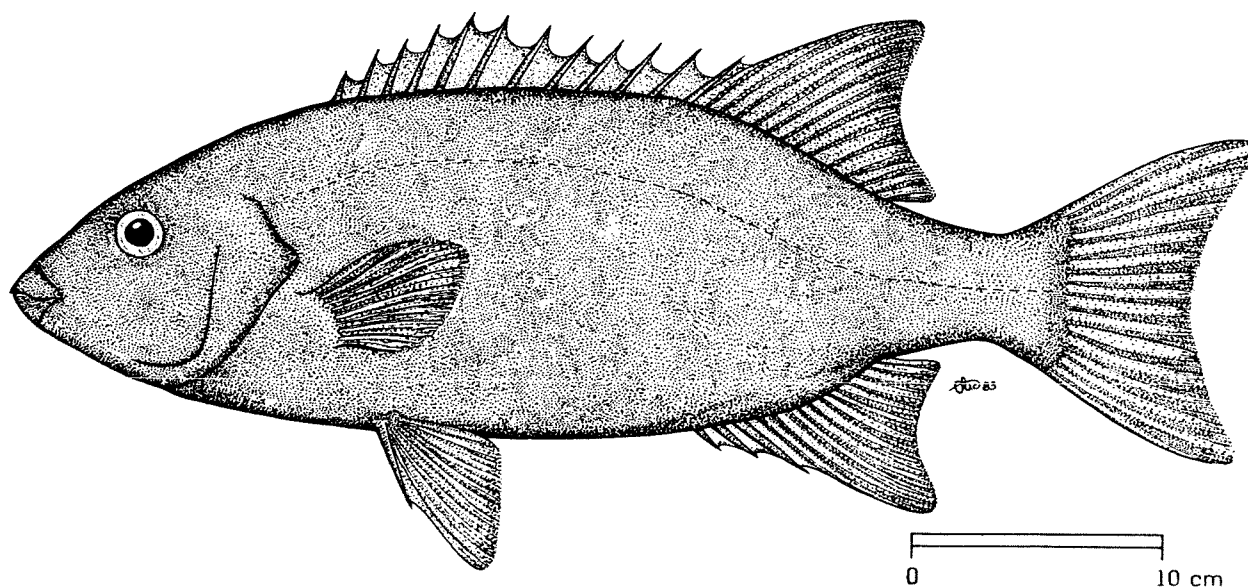
<u>Oplegnathus conwayi</u> Richardson, 1840	OPLEG Opl 1
<u>Oplegnathus pealopesi</u> Smith, 1946	OPLEG Opl 2
<u>Oplegnathus robinsoni</u> Regan, 1916	OPLEG Opl 3

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPLEGNATHIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)*Oplegnathus conwayi* Richardson, 1840

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO: En - Cape knifejaw
 Fr - Bastard du Cap
 Sp - Perico del Cabo

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body oblong-oval, moderately compressed, its depth contained 2 (juveniles) to 2.8 (adults) times in standard length. Mouth not protrusible, teeth in subadults and adults fused into cutting plates. Dorsal fin with 12 spines and 11 to 14 soft rays; anal fin with 3 spines and 11 to 13 soft rays. Scales very small, absent on top of head.

Colour: adults dusky, juveniles golden yellow with dark crossbars.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Oplegnathus pealopolesi: dorsal fin with 11 spines and 20 or 21 soft rays (12 spines and 11 to 14 soft rays in O. conwayi); anal fin with 16 soft rays (11 to 13 in O. conwayi); scales present on top of head, beginning behind eyes.

O. robinsoni: dorsal fin with 11 spines and 20 to 24 soft rays; anal fin with 14 to 17 soft rays; scales present on top of head, beginning over front of eyes.

SIZE:

Maximum: about 85 cm; common to 50 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Found off South Africa from False Bay to Natal.

Inhabits shallow waters, from the shoreline to about 150 m depth. Adults are found particularly around inshore reefs, while the juveniles occur in tidal pools or beneath floating objects.

Feeds on benthic invertebrates and seaweeds, mainly by nibbling and tearing off food attached to hard substrates.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

South Africa.

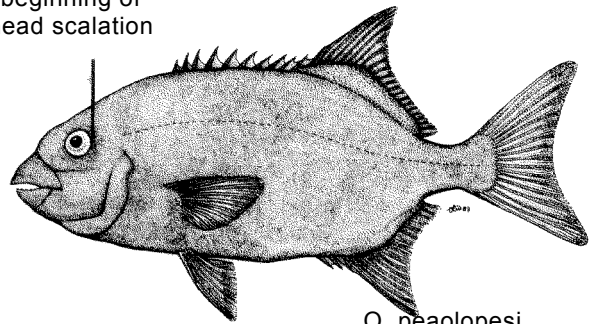
CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught on hook and line; also with gillnets but especially by spears.

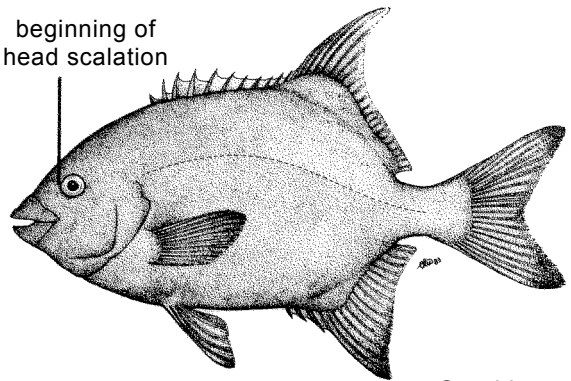
Marketed fresh; flesh of excellent quality.

beginning of
head scalation

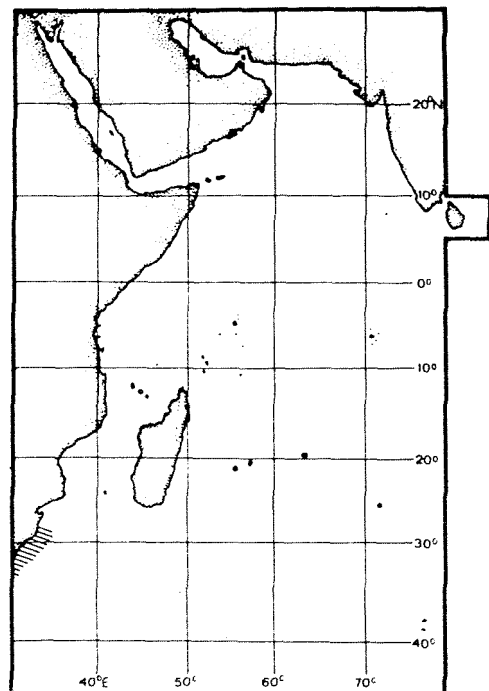


O. pealopolesi

beginning of
head scalation



O. robinsoni



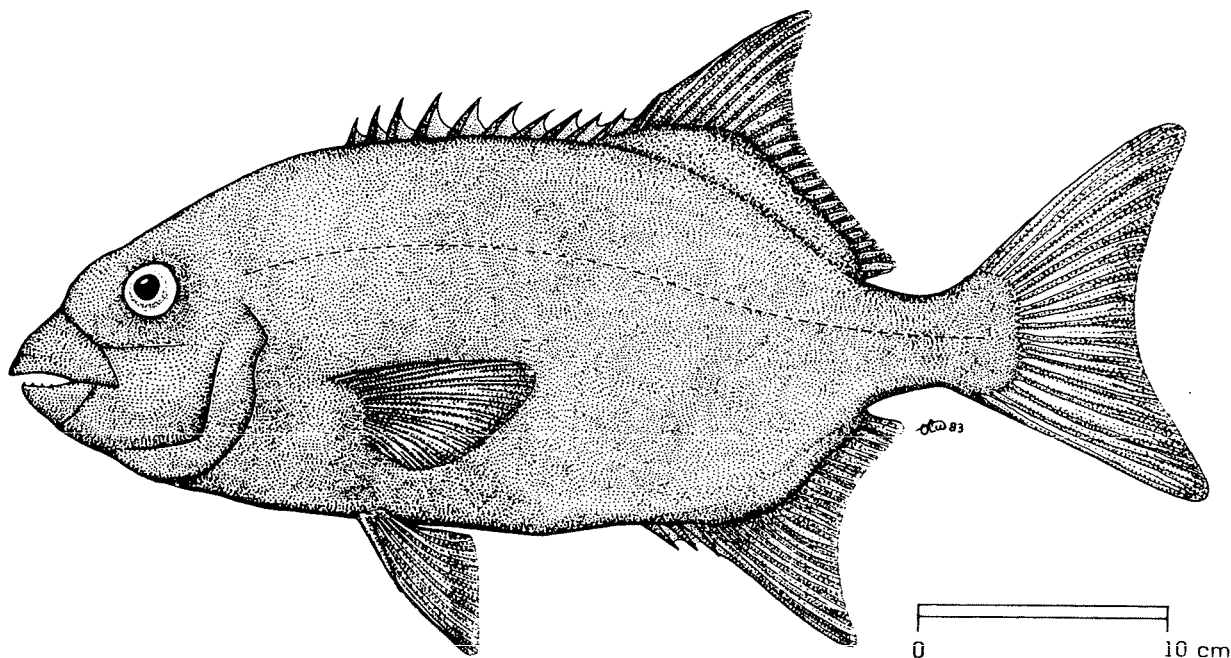
FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPLEGNATHIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

Oplegnathus pealopesi Smith, 1946

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

- FAO : En - Mozambique knifejaw
- Fr - Bastard du Mozambique
- Sp - Perico de Mozambique

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body oblong-oval, moderately compressed, its depth contained 2.5 to 2.7 times in standard length. Mouth not protrusible, teeth in subadults and adults fused into cutting plates. Dorsal fin with 11 spines and 20 or 21 rays, anal fin with 3 spines and 16 soft rays. Scales very small, beginning on top of head behind eyes.

Colour: adults dusky.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Oplegnathus robinsoni: body depth 1.8 to 2.1 times in standard length 2.5 to 2.7 times in O. *pealopesi*; scales on top of head beginning over front of eyes.

O. conwayi is dorsal fin with 12 spines and 11 to 14 soft rays 11 20 or 21, respectively, in O. *pealopesi*; anal fin with 11 to 13 soft rays (16 in O. *pealopesi*); no scales on top of head.

SIZE:

Maximum: about 75 cm; common to 50 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Along the East African coast, from Maputo Bay northward, but the northern limit of its range is unknown.

Inhabits reef areas in depths of about 20 to 130 m.

Feeds on benthic invertebrates.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

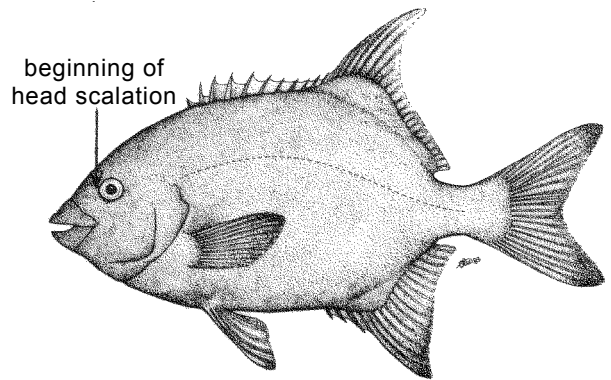
Mainly off Mozambique, perhaps also further north. Apparently not very abundant.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

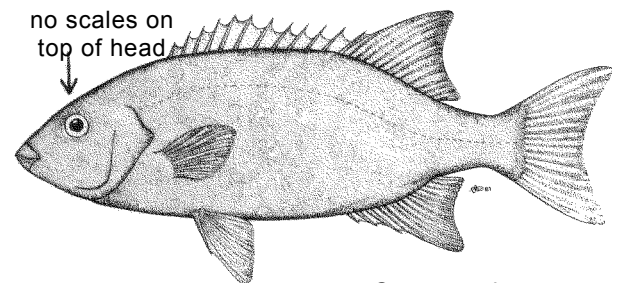
Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught mainly on hook and line.

Marketed mainly fresh; flesh of good quality.



O. robinsoni



O. conwayi

