

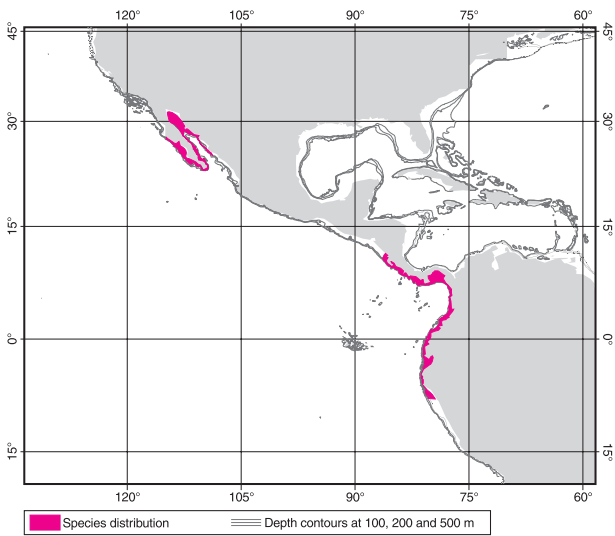
**Geographical distribution:** Gulf of California, outer coast of Baja California, and off north-western South America.

**Habitat and biology:** Benthic from 40 to 390 m. Common.

**Interest to fisheries:** This is potentially a marketable species but is currently not the subject of any fishery.

**Local names:** Specklefin cusk-eel, Congriperla, Pintada, Congriperla tach  t  .

**Size:** The largest species of *Lepophidium*, to 475 mm.



Tribe Ophidiini Rafinesque, 1810

**Diagnosis and description:** Some to all of the **scales on body elongate and arranged in basketweave (anguilloid) fashion**; except for *Raneya*, **cheeks, opercle and lower part of head entirely naked**; swimbladder stiffened, short, males often with a posterior opening or long tubular projection and with anterior vertebrae modified to support the swimbladder, anterior end of swimbladder in males may have a rocker bone (see Rose, 1961) or be enclosed in a bony casque; **pyloric caeca absent**.

**Number of recognized genera:** 5.

**Remarks:** The definition and relationships of the genera remain unknown. See comments under each genus.

Key to genera (modified after Cohen and Nielsen, 1978)

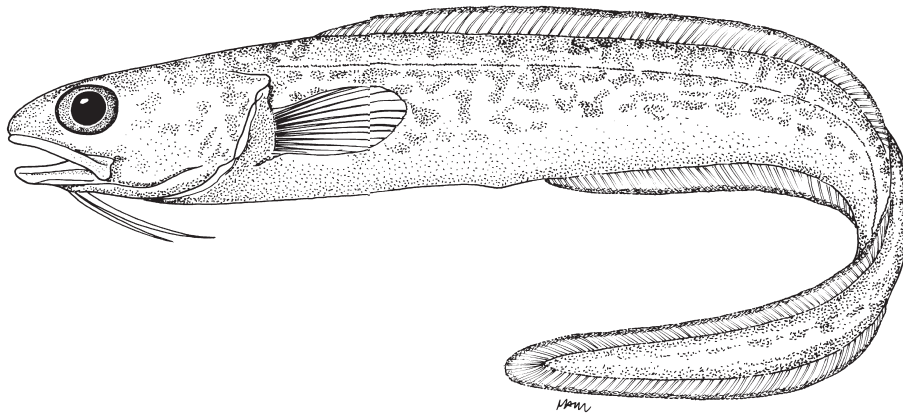
- 1a. Scales present on top of head . . . . . → 2
- 1b. Head naked except for 1 undescribed species of *Ophidion* which has a small patch of scales in front of the eye . . . . . → 3
- 2a. The 2 pelvic-fin rays equal in length; scales on head restricted to dorsal area, scales on body anguilloid . . . . . *Parophidion*
- 2b. The 2 pelvic-fin rays unequal in length; scales on top and sides of head and opercle, scales on body anguilloid anteriorly and below, otherwise in regular rows . . *Raneya*
- 3a. Dorsal-fin rays 187 to 229; anal-fin rays 150 or more; precaudal vertebrae 18 or 19, total vertebrae 86 to 91 . . . . . *Chilara*
- 3b. Dorsal-fin rays rarely if ever more than 150; anal-fin rays rarely more than 125; precaudal vertebrae usually fewer than 18. . . . . → 4
- 4a. Ethmoid spine stout, blunt, projecting anterodorsally . . . . . *Otophidium*
- 4b. Ethmoid spine absent, weakly developed, or long, sharp and projecting forward to or toward snout tip . . . . . *Ophidion*

<i>Chilara</i> Jordan and Evermann, 1896
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**Type species:** *Ophidium taylori* Girard, 1858a by monotypy.

**Synonyms:** None.

**Number of recognized species:** 1.



**Fig. 39** *Chilara taylori* (after Fitch and Larvenberg, 1968)

**Diagnosis and description:** Head naked; scales on body in basketweave pattern; **dorsal-fin rays 187 to 229**; **anal-fin rays 150 to 181**; **precaudal vertebrae 18 or 19, total vertebrae 86 to 91**; swimbladder in males with posterior opening; body and head with numerous dark spots and blotches.

**Revisions:** Lea (1980).

**Geographical distribution:** Eastern Pacific from Washington to Baja California and Ecuador (Lea and Béarez, 1999). A record from the Gulf of California is very doubtful.

**Habitat and biology:** Benthic on sandy bottom from shore to 280 m. Uncommon.

**Interest to fisheries:** None.

**Size:** At least 370 mm.

**List of nominal species**

*Ophidion novaculum* Harry, 1951 (junior synonym of *C. taylori*).

*Chilara taylori* (Girard, 1858a). Information see above.

<i>Ophidion</i> Linnaeus, 1758
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**Type species:** *Ophidion barbatum* Linnaeus, 1758 by subsequent designation by Gill (1863b).

**Synonyms:** *Ophidium* Linnaeus, 1766 is an unjustified emendation; *Rissola* Jordan and Evermann, 1896, type species *Ophidium marginatum* DeKay, 1842.

**Number of recognized species:** 21.

**Diagnosis and description:** **Head entirely naked** (1 undescribed species has a small patch of scales in front of the eye); scales on body elongated, arranged in basketweave or anguillid pattern; dorsal-fin rays fewer than 150.

**Revisions:** None.

**Geographical distribution:** Nearly worldwide in warm-temperate and tropical coastal and shelf waters.

**Habitat and biology:** Benthic from coastal bays and inlets to 350 m.

**Interest to fisheries:** Little. *Ophidion holbrooki*, the largest Atlantic species enters the shrimp bycatch fishery in Colombia as “perla”.

**Size:** 90 to 300 mm.

**Remarks:** Within this genus the relations of the various species groups to each other and to *Otophidium* and *Parophidion* are unclear.

**Key to species:** Not possible at present.

### List of nominal species

About 30 species are known, 11 of them undescribed at present. For convenience they are grouped below by region.

#### Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic species

*Ophidion barbatum* Linnaeus, 1758. Southern England to Senegal and the northern Mediterranean Sea from Gibraltar to Israel. Benthic from shallows to 150 m. Uncommon.

*O. broussoneti* Müller, 1845 (junior synonym of *O. rochei*).

*O. lagocheila* (Böhlke and Robins, 1959). From Bermuda and Bahamas to Venezuela. Shallow coastal waters. Rare.

*O. lozanoi* Matallanas, 1990. From Spain to Senegal. Benthic in 60 to 80 m. Uncommon.

*O. maculatum* Rafinesque, 1810 (unneeded new name for *O. barbatum*).

*O. rochei* Müller, 1845. Western and northern Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. Benthic from shallows to 150 m. Uncommon.

**Remarks:** One undescribed species occurs in the eastern Atlantic.

#### Indian Ocean and western and central Pacific species

*Ophidion asiro* (Jordan and Fowler, 1902) (junior synonym of *O. muraenolepis*).

*O. genyopus* (Ogilby, 1897). Coastal waters of New South Wales, Australia. Benthic. Uncommon.

*O. smithi* (Fowler, 1934). From Red Sea to Natal, Seychelles and northwestern coast of Australia. Benthic in shallow coastal waters. This species is questionably distinct from *O. genyopus*. Uncommon.

*O. muraenolepis* (Günther, 1880). Wideranging in central and western Pacific from Hawaii to Taiwan Province of China and Arafura Sea. Benthic in deep shelf and upper slope waters in 80 to 250 m. This is a little sampled habitat across the region and a wide distribution of this species is anticipated. Uncommon.

**Remarks:** At least 2 undescribed species occur in this region.

#### Eastern Pacific species

*Ophidion exul* Robins, 1991. Easter Island and the Marquesas Islands. Benthic from shore to 20 m. Uncommon.

*O. fulvum* (Hildebrand and Barton, 1949). From Costa Rica to Peru. Benthic from shore to 20 m. Uncommon.

*O. galeoides* (Gilbert, 1890). From outer coast of Baja California and northern Gulf of California to Gulf of Panama. Benthic from near shore to 75 m. Uncommon.

*O. imitator* Lea, 1997. From tip of Baja California to Gulf of Panama. Benthic in 18 to 112 m. Uncommon.

*O. iris* Breder, 1936. Entire Gulf of California and adjacent coast of Mexico to Banderas Bay. Benthic from shore to 86 m. Uncommon.

*O. metoecus* Robins, 1991. Juan Fernandez Islands (Isla Juan Fernandez), and Isla San Felix. Benthic from shore to 31 m. Uncommon.

*O. nigricauda* Breder, 1936 (junior synonym of *O. iris*).

*O. scrippsae* (Hubbs, 1916). From northern California to Baja California. The single record from the Gulf of California is regarded as erroneous. Benthic from shore to 110 m. Uncommon.

**Remarks:** Three undescribed species occur in eastern Pacific waters.

### Western Atlantic

*Ophidion beani* Jordan and Gilbert, 1883 (junior synonym of *O. holbrooki*).

*O. grayi* Fowler, 1948. From South Carolina and northern Gulf of Mexico to Mexico. Benthic in 10 to 60 m. Uncommon.

*O. holbrooki* (Putnam, 1874). See species account.

*O. josephi* Girard, 1858b. From Georgia to northeastern Florida and entire northern Gulf of Mexico. Benthic in shallow coastal waters. Common.

*O. marginatum* (DeKay, 1842). From New York to northeastern Florida, but needs clarification. Benthic in shallow coastal waters. Common.

*O. nocomis* Robins and Böhlke, 1959. From Bahamas to Puerto Rico. Benthic in shallow sandy bays. Uncommon.

*O. robinsi* Fahay, 1992. From New Jersey to South Carolina. Benthic in 12 to 45 m. Rare.

*O. selenops* Robins and Böhlke, 1959. From South Carolina to the Florida Keys including the southeastern Gulf of Mexico. Benthic in 12 to 45 m. Uncommon.

*O. welshi* (Nichols and Breder, 1922). Its ranges along the southeastern United States needs clarification. Probably a junior synonym of *O. josephi*. Common.

**Remarks:** A manuscript by Lea and Robins describing 4 new species from the western Atlantic has been completed.

### *Ophidion holbrooki* (Putnam, 1874)

**Synonyms:** *Ophidion beani* Jordan and Gilbert, 1883.

**FAO names:** En - Band cusk-eel.

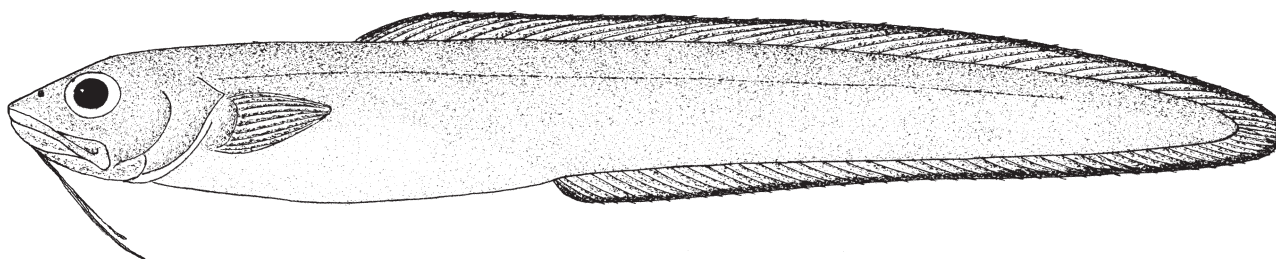


Fig. 40 *Ophidion holbrooki*

**Diagnosis and description:** Head and body tan, unmarked except for dark margin to dorsal fin and, occasionally, anal fin; gill raker on first arch with 2 rudiments on upper limb and 4 developed rakers on lower limb; **mouth subterminal; dorsal profile nearly straight from snout to dorsal-fin origin (not arched); body distinctly deepest at dorsal-fin origin; body slab-sided.**

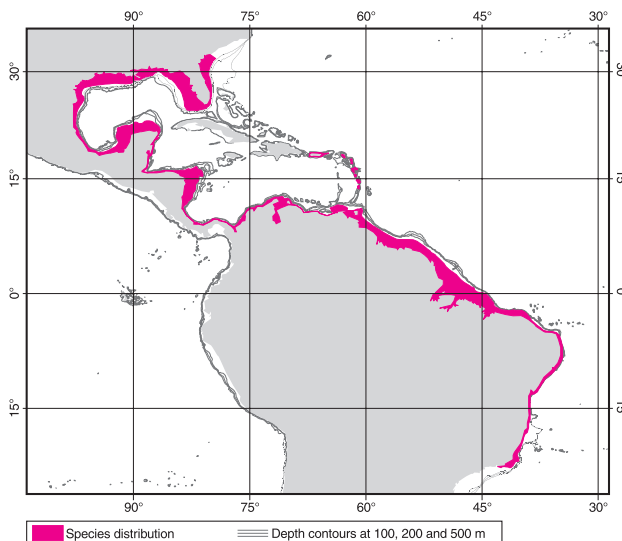
**Geographical distribution:** North Carolina and northern Gulf of Mexico to southeastern Brazil. Absent from the Bahamas.

**Habitat and biology:** Benthic from coastal bays to 75 m. Common.

**Interest to fisheries:** Little. Sometimes landed as a bycatch of the shrimp trawling fishery. In Colombia is marketed under the local name of “perla”. Its flesh is appreciated.

**Local names:** Band cusk-eel.

**Size:** At least 300 mm.

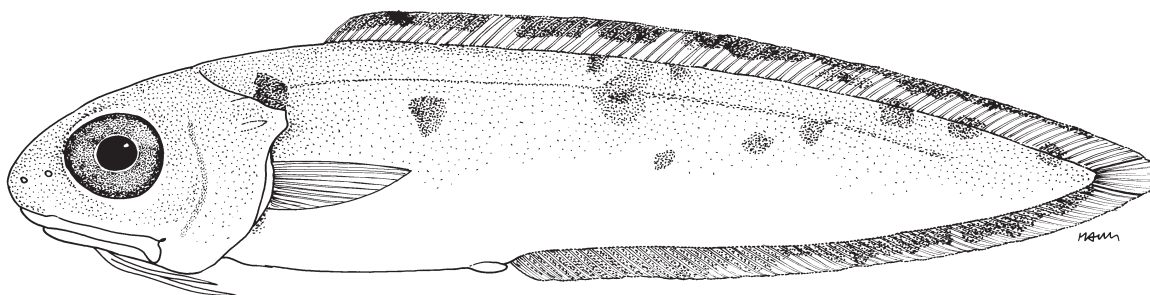


*Otophidium* Gill in Jordan, 1885

**Type species:** *Genypterus omostigma* Jordan and Gilbert, 1882b by original designation.

**Synonyms:** None.

**Number of recognized species:** 4.



**Fig. 41** *Otophidium omostigma* (after Robins, 1959)

**Diagnosis and description:** **Ethmoid spine stout, blunt, projecting anterodorsally;** swimbladder stout, short, with posterior opening in males; dorsal-fin rays 97 to 117; anal-fin rays 84 to 102.

**Revisions:** None.

**Geographical distribution:** Western Atlantic from North Carolina, Bermuda, and northern Gulf of Mexico to Lesser Antilles. Eastern Pacific from Gulf of California to Panama and Galapagos Islands.

**Habitat and biology:** Benthic from sandy shores to 100 m.



**Interest to fisheries:** None.

**Size:** At least 130 mm.

**Key to species:** Not possible at present.

#### List of species

*Otophidium chickcharney* Böhlke and Robins, 1959. The Bahamas. Benthic from shore to 15 m. Rare.

*O. dormitator* Böhlke and Robins, 1959. From southern Florida and the Bahamas to Yucatan, Mexico and the Lesser Antilles. Benthic from shore to 15 m. Rare.

*O. indefatigabile* Jordan and Bollman, 1890. From outer coast of Baja California and Gulf of California to Panama and the Galapagos Islands. Uncommon.

*O. omostigma* (Jordan and Gilbert, 1882b). From North Carolina and northern Gulf of Mexico to Florida and Lesser Antilles. Benthic in 16 to 50 m. Uncommon.

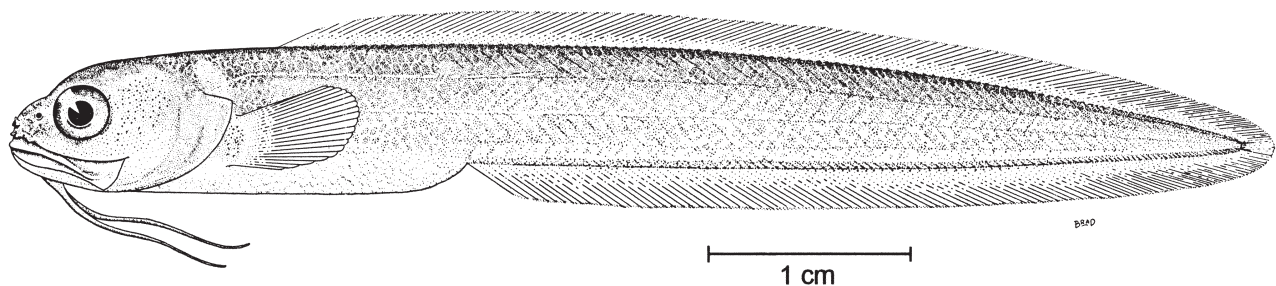
**Remarks:** Four species are currently assigned to this genus. The relationship of this group relative to the diverse species groups currently assigned to *Ophidion* is unclear.

*Parophidion* Tortonese, 1954

**Type species:** *Ophidion vassali* Risso, 1810 by original designation.

**Synonyms:** None.

**Number of recognized species:** 2.



**Fig. 42** *Parophidion schmidtii* (from Woods and Kanazawa, 1951)

**Diagnosis and description:** Scales on body in anguilloid pattern, somewhat overlapping, interorbital region scaled, opercle naked, **cheeks, top of head forward to centre of interorbital region scaled**; ethmoid spine reduced to a low bump; gill chamber and guts pale; no pyloric caeca; males with posterior opening on swimbladder; the **2 pelvic-fin rays equally long** or very nearly so.

**Revisions:** Böhlke and Robins (1959).

**Geographical distribution:** Tropical western Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent northeastern Atlantic.

**Habitat and biology:** Shallow coastal waters.

**Interest to fisheries:** None.

**Size:** At least 10 cm.

**Key to species:** The 2 species are separated geographically (see below).