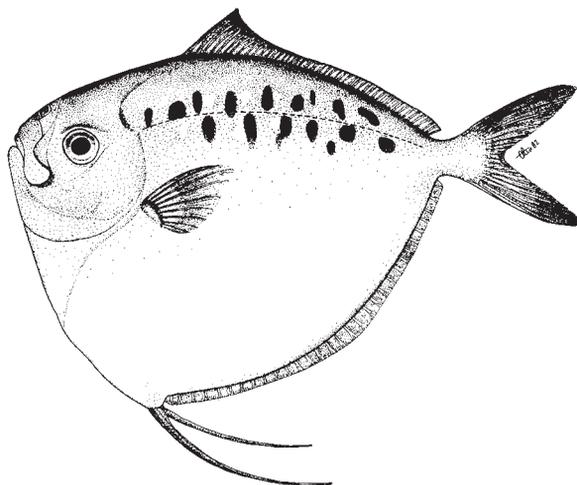


MENIDAE**Moonfish**

by D.J. Woodland

A single species in this family.*Mene maculata* (Bloch and Schneider, 1801)

MOD

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: None / None.**FAO names:** En - Moonfish; Fr - Luneur; Sp - Lunero.**Diagnostic characters:** Body very deep, almost triangular, extremely compressed; breast sharp-edged; greatest body depth below lateral line at least 4 times greater than greatest body depth above lateral line. Mouth small, almost vertical, protrusible; teeth limited to villiform bands in jaws. Dorsal fin single, long-based, and low, except for a short peak anteriorly; spines thin and flexible and difficult to distinguish from the 34th to 36th soft rays; X spines in juveniles, reducing in number with increasing age. **Anal fin very long-based, commencing at point of insertion of pelvic fins, uniformly very low;** II spines in juveniles, but these and some leading soft rays become overgrown with skin with increasing age; free tips of visible rays splayed out. Caudal fin deeply forked. Pectoral fins shorter than head length. Pelvic fins inserted slightly in front of pectoral fins, with 1 short spine followed by 5 soft rays, the first 2 soft rays fused and greatly elongated. Lateral line tracking upwards towards base of last ray of dorsal fin, often terminating there well above midline of caudal peduncle but sometimes continuing onto base of upper lobe of caudal fin. Body covered with minute scales invisible to the naked eye, easily brushed off. **Colour:** upper sides deep metallic blue, remainder silvery, with a row of round to ovoid, dark slaty-blue spots above and below lateral line, sometimes a few additional spots above and below these rows; pelvic fins with a trace of blue, other fins hyaline or slightly dusky.**Similar species occurring in the area**

All other species with which *Mene maculata* might be confused have distinct spines in the dorsal and anal fins, or distinct scales, or keels on the caudal peduncle, and the area of the sides above the midline (eye to caudal-fin fork) is either greater than or about equal to the area below the midline.

Size: Maximum total length about 30 cm, commonly to 20 cm

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Inhabits coastal waters near the bottom on both continental shelves and around major island groups to depths of 200 m; seems to prefer deep water but occasionally enters river estuaries. Schooling; feeds on small invertebrates. Caught in trawls and by beach seine, but mainly by trawling, often incidentally, but schools may be sought out by echo survey; flesh excellent in quality but small in quantity; dried in India and some other Asian countries but also marketed fresh. From 1990 to 1995, the FAO Yearbook of Fishery Statistics reports a range of yearly catch of 4 207 to 9 077 t of *M. maculata* from the area (almost exclusively from the Philippines).

Distribution: From East Africa, as far south as Durban, to the western Pacific; in Australia, stragglers as far south as Shark Bay (Western Australia) and Noosa R. on the eastern Australian coast; northern limits of southern Japan.

Reference

Gloerfelt-Tarp, T. and P.J. Kailola. 1984. *Trawled fishes of southern Indonesia and northwestern Australia*. Jakarta, Dir. Gen. Fish. (Indonesia), German Tech. Coop., Aust. Dev. Assoc. Bur., 406 p.

