

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

MACRORAMPHOSIDAE

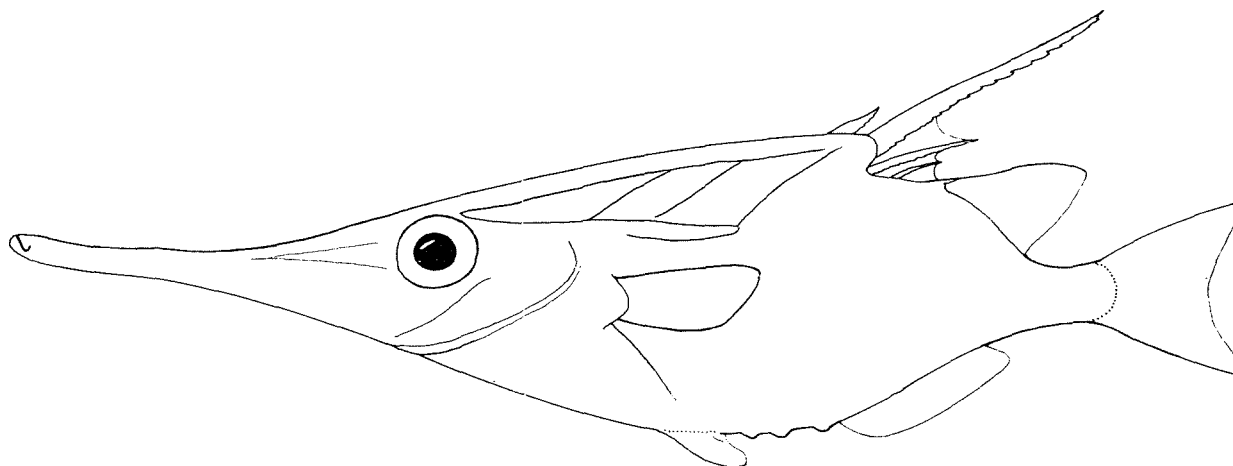
Snipefishes

Small-sized fishes (may reach about 25 cm in length but are mostly half that size); body moderately elongate to deep, and compressed; caudal peduncle short. Head elongate; snout extremely long, slender, and tubelike; eyes large; mouth very small, located at the tip of the long snout. Two short-based dorsal fins; the first dorsal fin originating well behind midbody and with 4 to 8 stout spines, the second spine greatly enlarged and serrated on the posterior margin; second dorsal fin small with 11 to 19 slender rays; anal fin with 16 to 20 slender rays; pelvic fins small, originating at or behind midbody, well behind pectoral fin base. Lateral line present or absent. Scales small, spiny; 2 rows of bony plates embedded in the skin on the shoulder, and several rows along the central midline ahead of the pelvic fins.

Colour: orange, pink, or red on the back, paler and silvery on the sides; sometimes with as many as 5 oblique dark bars across body.

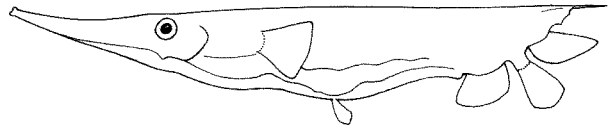
Snipefishes are found in schools over sand or mud bottoms in deep water, often most abundant at the edge of the continental shelf. The usual posture is hovering head-down, but when moving or when in large schools the orientation is horizontal. They feed on small benthic animals.

Due to their small size, snipefishes are not valuable as food for man but since they occur in large numbers they can be used to produce fishmeal and oil. Taken in bottom trawls.



SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

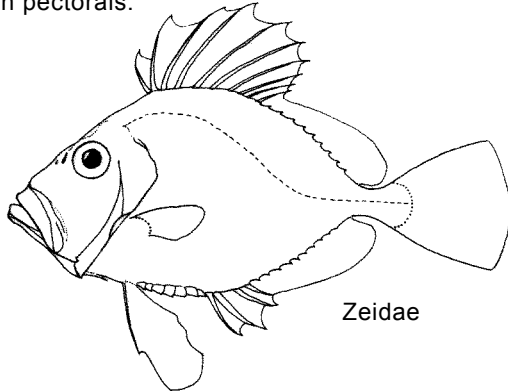
Centriscidae: body bladelike and completely covered with bony plates; first dorsal spine at hindmost point of body.



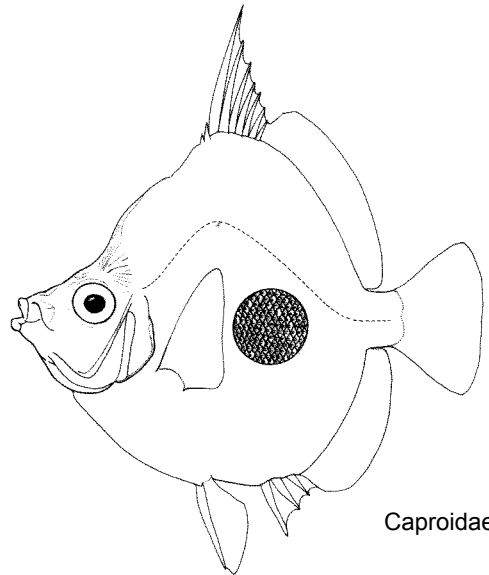
Centriscidae

Caproidae: snout not produced as an elongate tube; 3 stout spines in anal fin; small ctenoid scales.

Zeidae: large mouth, short snout, and pelvic fins longer than pectorals.



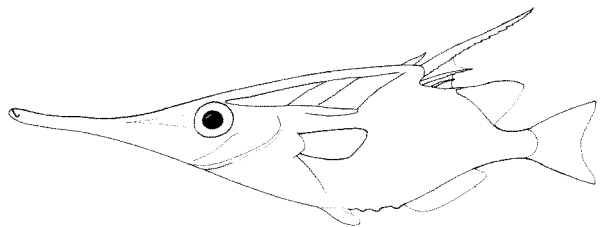
Zeidae



Caproidae

KEY TO GENERA OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

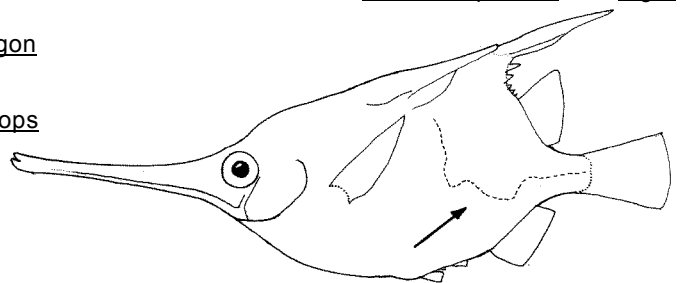
1.a Distinct spiny scales; body moderately deep, maximum depth less than about 30 % of standard length (Fig.1)..... Macroramphosus



Macroramphosus Fig.1

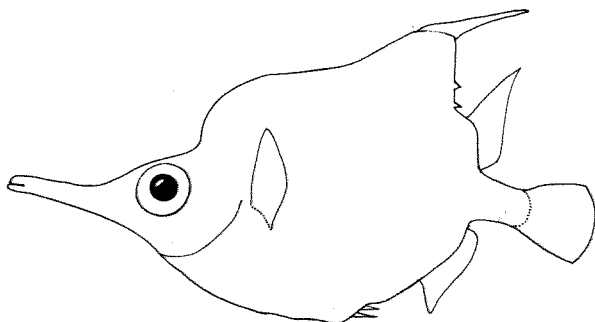
1.b Scales not evident, skin with rough bristles; body deep, maximum depth usually greater than 40 % of standard length

2a. Lateral line present (Fig.2) Notopogon



Notopogon Fig.2

2b. Lateral line absent (Fig.3) Centriscops



Centriscops Fig.3

LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA*:

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

Centriscoops humerosus (Richardson, 1846)

Macroramphosus scolopax (Linnaeus, 1758)

MACROR Macror 1

Notopogon macrosolen Barnard, 1925

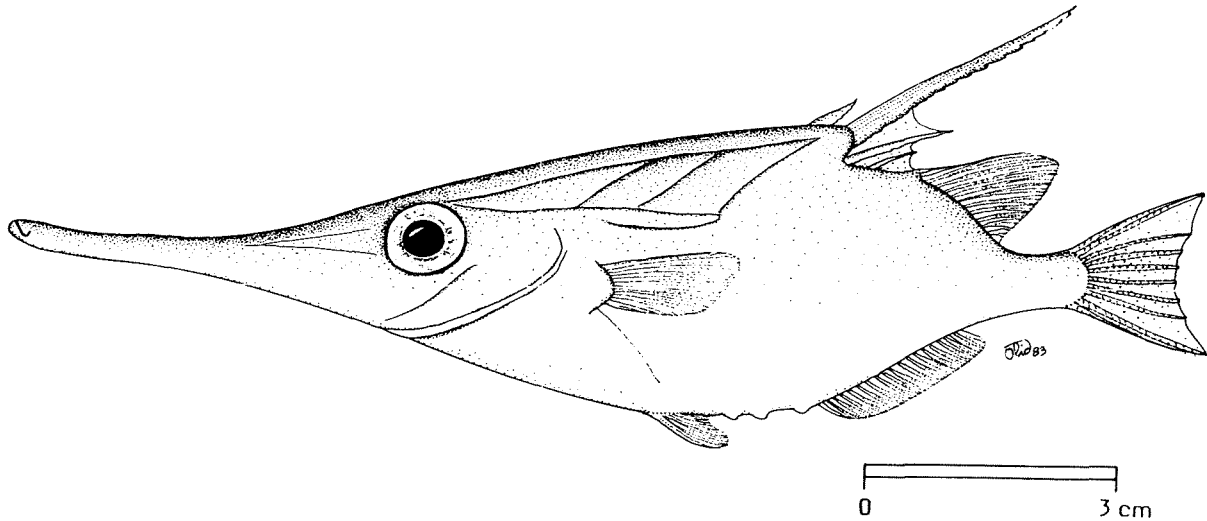
Notopogon lilliei Regan, 1914

Prepared by R.L. Haedrich, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

*This list is still tentative since the species are not well defined yet and the group is in need of revision

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: MACRORAMPHOSIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Macroramptiosus scolopax (Linnaeus, 1758)OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE : Macroramphosus racilis (Lowe, 1839)
Macrorhamphosus velitaris (Pallas, 1776)

VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Longspine snipe
 Fr - Bécasse de mer
 Sp - Trompetero

NATIONAL:

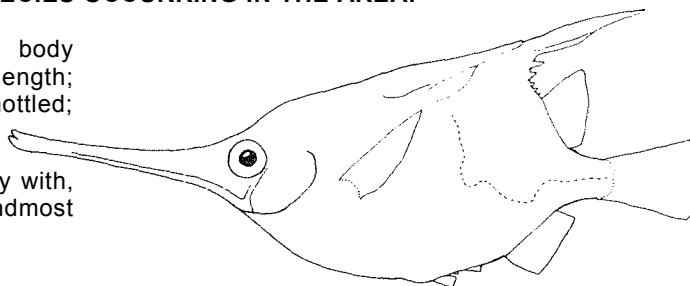
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body somewhat elongate and compressed. Head elongate, the snout produced as a slender tube; mouth small and verminal; eyes lateral, large, their diameter contained about 4.5 times in snout length. First dorsal fin with second spine large and serrate on rear margin, other spines stout but short; second dorsal and anal fins with short, slender rays; caudal peduncle short. Scales small, finely toothed giving the body a "sandpapery" feeling; 2 rows of bony plates embedded in the skin on the back between head and dorsal fin.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Species of Notopogon and Centriscops: body deeper. usually greater than 40% of standard length; colour pattern not uncommonly with bars or mottled; scales buried and indistinct.

Species of Centriscidae: body covered entirely with, bony plates; caudal fin offset, first dorsal fin at hindmost point of body.



Notopogon

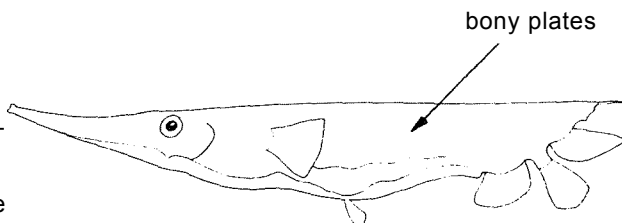
SIZE:

Maximum: about 20 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

South Africa to off southwestern India, and eastward to Japan. Probably worldwide.

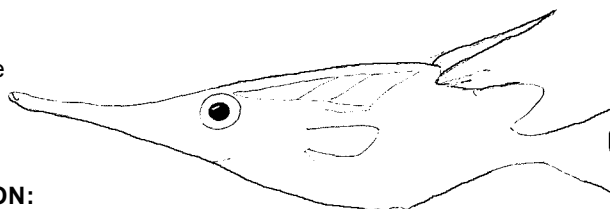
Generally in rather deep water, small schools have been reported from as shallow as 15 m in Japan.



Centriscidae

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

Taken in good numbers in 80 to 300 m near the edge of the continental shelf off Guilon, Kerala.



Macroramphosus

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Taken with bottom trawls in deep water.

Used for fishmeal and oil.

