TRACHIC

1983

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

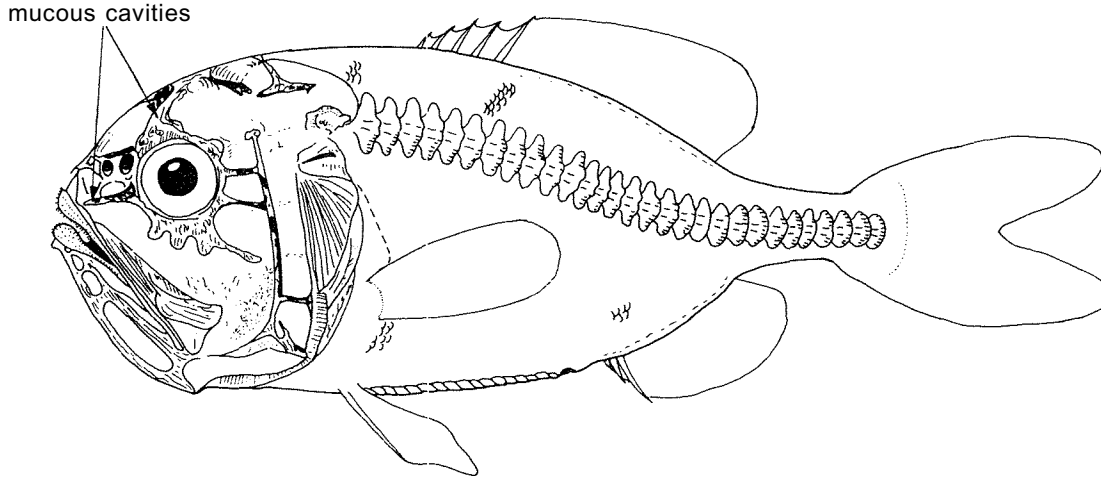
TRACHICHTHYIDAE

Slimeheads

Body oval, compressed. Head with large, skin-covered mucous cavities, the walls between these cavities often with serrated crests; preopercle and opercle spines usually present; only one supramaxilla; jaws with bands of minute teeth. Dorsal fin with 3 to 8 striated or ridged spines and 10 to 19 soft rays, its base about twice the length of anal fin base; anal fin with 2 or 3 spines and 8 to 12 soft rays. Lateral-line scales more or less enlarged; scales along midventral part of belly enlaced, forming a row of well-developed scutes in most species.

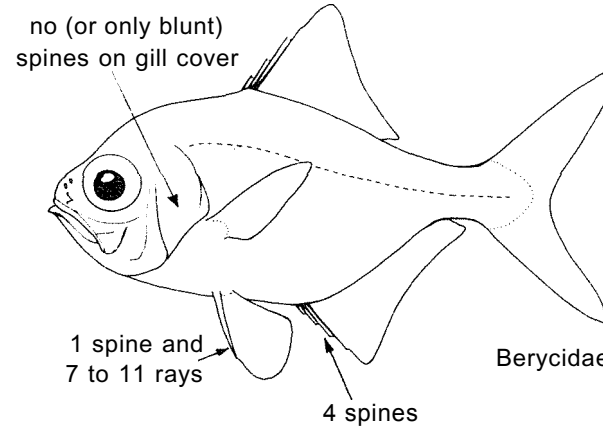
Colour: generally reddish pink or dusky silver.

Medium-sized fishes (to about 60 cm total length) occurring near the bottom in depths of 100 to 1 000 m (mostly between 250 and 600 m). Many species of slimeheads are cosmopolitan in distribution and some are reported to be rather abundant in certain areas. They are caught with bottom and pelagic trawls as well as with longlines, and are marketed fresh or made into fishmeal and oil by offshore fishing fleets. In view of their local abundance and the current trend toward development of deepwater trawl fisheries, the slimeheads are of potential commercial importance.

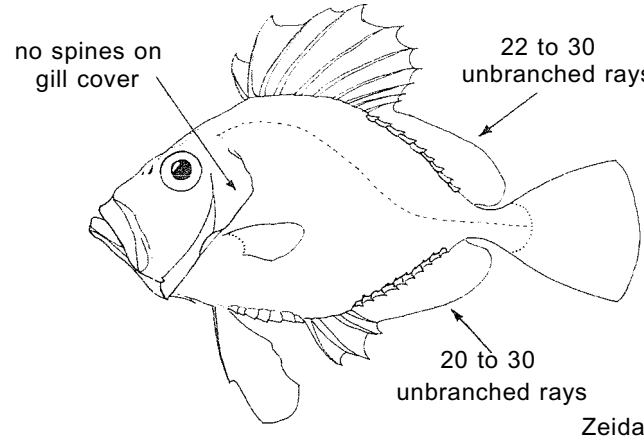


SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Berycidae: no prominent spines on opercle or preopercle; 2 supramaxillae (one in Trachichthydae); dorsal fin spines closely set; anal fin spines 4 (2 or 3 in Trachichthyidae); pelvic fin with 7 to 12 soft-rays (5 or 6 in Trachichthyidae).



Zeidae: no spines on opercle or preopercle; dorsal fin with 22 to 30 unbranched soft-rays; anal fin soft rays 20 to 30 (dorsal soft rays 12 to 19, anal fin soft rays 8 to 12 in Trachichthyidae).



Zeidae

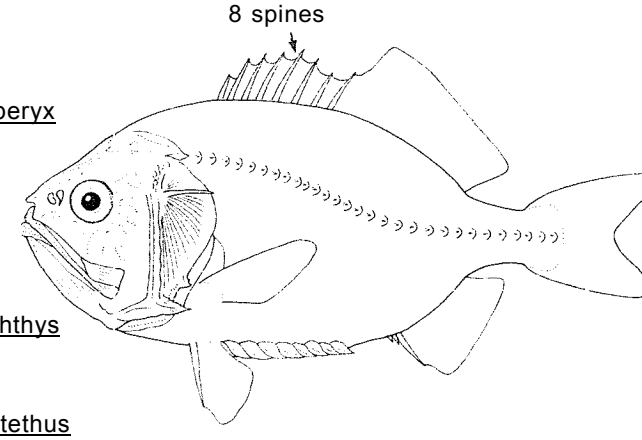
KEY TO GENERA OCCURRING IN THE AREA*:

1a. Dorsal fin spines 8; spinous dorsal fin base longer than anal fin base (Fig.1) ..... Gephyroberyx

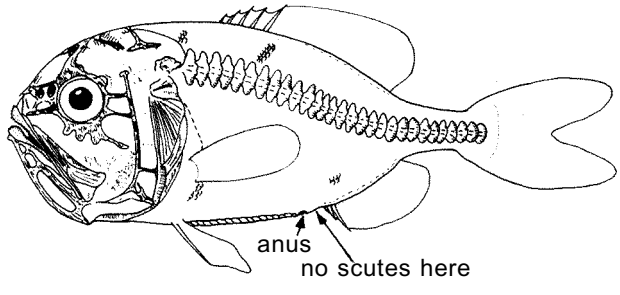
1b. Dorsal fin spines 4 to 7; spinous dorsal fin base shorter than anal fin base

2a. Anus between pelvic fin bases; a row of scutes from anus to anal fin (Fig.2).... Paratrachichthys

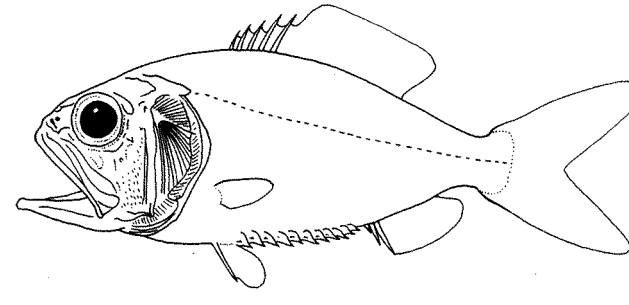
2b. Anus immediately before anal fin; no scutes between anus and anal fin (Fig.3) . Hoplostethus



Gephyroberyx Fig.1



Hoplostethus Fig.3



Paratrachichthys Fig.2

*Trachichthodes spinosus (Gilchrist, 1903), a South African species, was assigned to the Trachichthyidae by Smith (The Sea Fishes of Southern Africa, 1949); but this species is properly placed in the Berycidae

KEY TO SPECIES OF Hoplostethus OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

1a. Dorsal fin soft rays 16 to 19; anal fin soft rays 10 to 12; (soutes along the ventral midline of belly very small or absent) ..... H. atlanticus

1b. Dorsal fir, soft rays 12 to 16; anal fir, soft rays 8 to 10

2a. Pectoral fin rays 14 to 16; 8 to 12 well-developed soutes on belly ..... H. mediterraneus

2b. Pectoral fin rays 16 to 20; 13 to 18 small soutes on belly

3a. Greatest body depth 50 to 57% of standard length; length of longest gillraker 19 to 30% of head length ..... H. melanopus

3b. Greatest body depth 47°ío of standard length; longest gillraker 9.7% of head length ..... H. tenebricus*

LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

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

Gephyroberyx darwini (Johnson, 1866)

Hoplostethus atlanticus Collett, 1889 (=H. gilchristi Smith, 1935)
Hoplostethus mediterraneus Cuvier, 1829
Hoplostethus melanopus (Weber, 1913) (= H. natalensis Kotlyar, 1978) *
* Hoplostethus tenebricus Kotlyar, 1980

Paratrachichthys sajademalensis Kotlyar, 1979

Prepared by P.C. Heemstra, J.F.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, Grahamstown, South Africa

*A doubtful species known from only 1 specimen from off southern Mozambique

TRACHIP

1983

FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)

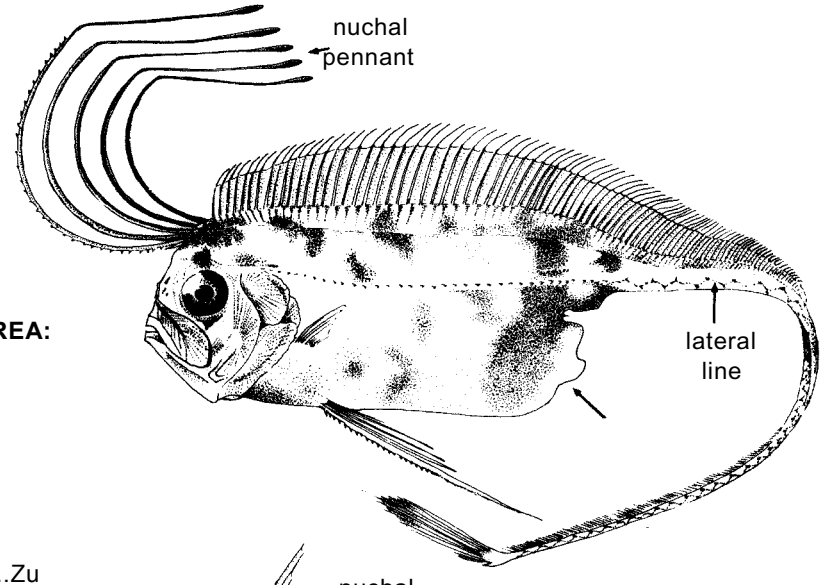
TRACHIPTERIDAE

Ribbonfishes

Body more or less elongate, ribbon-like and strongly compressed with anus located at about middle of body length. Head short; mouth small protrusible, more or less vertical; a few small pointed teeth in both jaws; teeth also present on vomer (roof of mouth). Dorsal fin originating above or slightly posterior to eye and extending nearly to caudal fin origin, its anterior rays more or less detached and elongate, forming a nuchal pennant; anal fin absent; caudal fin either horizontal or with two lobes, the upper perpendicularly upturned, the lower rudimentary; pectoral fins short, inserted horizontally; pelvic tins inserted on ventral midline of body, with 3 to 9 rays markedly elongate in the young; rays in nuchal pennant, pelvic fins and lower lobe of caudal fin tending to become reduced and to disappear completely with age. Skin rather uniformly covered with bony tubercles in adults (these tubercles sometimes arranged in subvertical bands). Lateral line consisting of bony plates, each armed with a spine and gradually descending toward midventral profile and terminating either at base of caudal fin or extending unto lower caudal fin lobe. These fishes undergo considerable changes in shape of body and fins during growth.

Colour: bright silver, with or without dark transverse bands or spots; fins red or yellow in life.

Mesopelagic fishes, rather common in all temperate and tropical seas; only occasionally taken in offshore fisheries, but often found floating dead on the surface or thrown on the shore after gales.

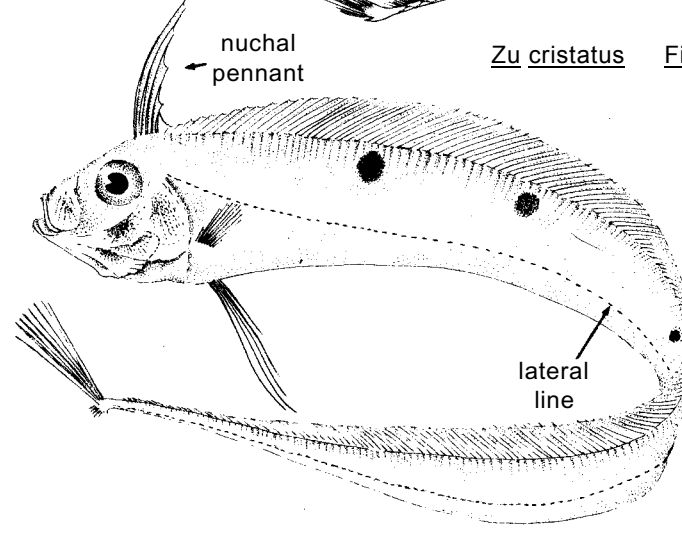


Zu cristatus Fig.1

KEY TO GENERA OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

1 a. Deciduous cycloid scales present on body. Ventral body profile scalloped before anus where body is constricted to form an elongate slender tail; lateral line wavy on tail; dorsal finrays 135 to 145; colour pattern of dark vertical bars or blotches (Fig.1) ....Zu

1b. Body scaleless. Ventral profile without marked constriction at anus, lateral line straight on tail; dorsal finrays 160 or more; colour pattern uniform, polka-dotted or a few large dark spots or longitudinal lines (Fig.2) ..... Trachipterus



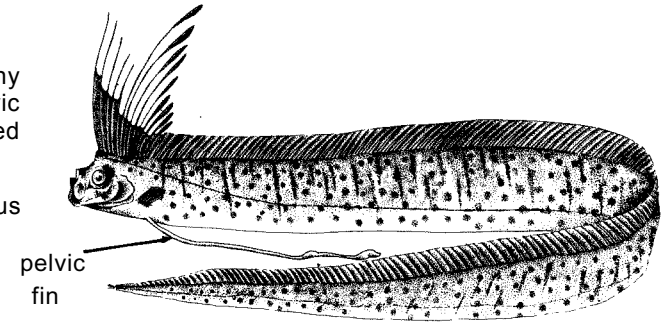
Trachipterus trachypterus Fig.2

* Excluding Desmodema, a rare form not yet recorded from the area

SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Regalecidae: lateral line plates smooth; bony tubercles arranged in longitudinal bands or ridges; pelvic fins modified into a long filamentous ray; anus situated anterior to midpoint of body.

Lophotidae: anal fin located near caudal fin; anus near to posterior end of body; skin smooth.



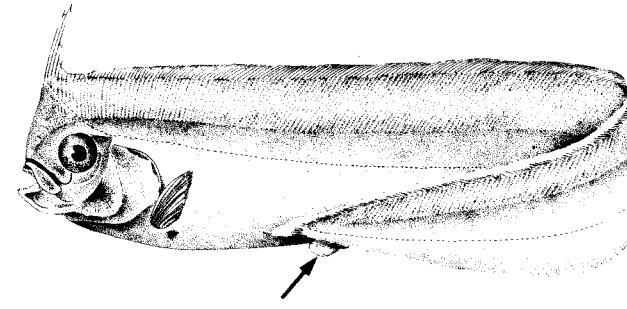
Regalecidae (Regalecus)

LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

*Desmodema polysticta (Ogilby, 1897)

Trachipterus nigrifons Smith, 1956
Trachipterus trachypterus (Gmelin, 1789)
Trachipterus woodi Smith, 1953

Zu cristatus (Bonnelli, 1820)



Lophotidae (Lophotes)

Prepared by M.L. Bauchot, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Ichtyologie générale et appliquée, Paris, France

* So far only recorded from the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, but probably circumtropical and occurring in the Indian Ocean

** Doubtful species, possibly a juvenile