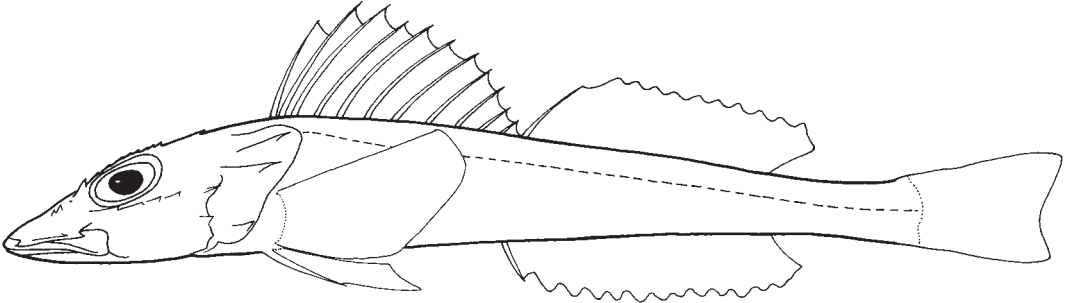


BEMBRIDAE

Deepwater flatheads

by S.G. Poss

Diagnostic characters: Small bottom fishes (size to nearly 30 cm standard length), with large and depressed heads and subcylindrical bodies. **Body without large scute-like spines.** Lower jaw superior or slightly subterminal. Eye moderately large, about 24 to 42% of head length. No iris lapit or ocular flaps. **Infraorbital bones forming a strong ridge, confluent with uppermost preopercular spine and bearing 4 to 6 spines.** Spines on head short or moderate, 8 to 11 above eye. Dorsal fin separated into a spinous and soft-rayed part. None to III spines present in anal fin. Pectoral fins without free rays. Lateral-line scales about 28 to 85. Scales on body otherwise ctenoid. **Colour:** usually red, orange, or light brown; some species with green, dark green, or black spots or blotches on body and fins; anal fins sometimes black or nearly so.

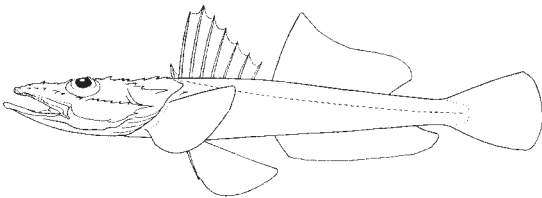


Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Bottom fishes living on the continental shelf at depths of 80 to 581 m. The family limits are not well understood and have been variously regarded as including from 5 to 13 species in 6 genera, with the most recent review (not including *Brachybembras*) restricting the family to include only species of the genus *Bembras*, with the monotypic *Parabembras curtus* being placed in a closely related family Parabembridae and species of *Bembradium* being placed in a family Plectrogeniidae.

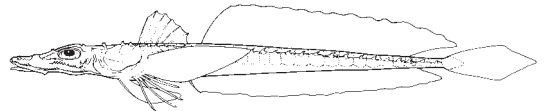
Similar families occurring in the area

Platycephalidae: first dorsal-fin spine relatively short, not broadly attached to the second dorsal fin-spine (long and broadly attached in Bembridae); pelvic fins inserted behind pectoral-fin insertion (immediately ventral to pectoral-fin insertion in Bembridae).

Hoplichthyidae: head extremely compressed with numerous minute head spines (head less compressed with fewer somewhat larger spines in Bembridae); spiny scutes along lateral line (absent in Bembridae); pectoral fins with 3 or 4 detached lower rays (no detached rays in Bembridae).



Platycephalidae



Hoplichthyidae

Key to the species of Bembridae occurring in the area

- 1a. Anal fin with III spines; lower jaws extended anterior to upper jaws; maxillae relatively narrow posteriorly. *Parabembras curtus*
- 1b. Anal fin without spines; lower jaws terminal, not extending anterior to upper jaws; maxillae relatively broad posteriorly → 2

- 2a.** Lateral-line scales 28 to 32; pectoral-fin rays 21 to 30; head larger, 38 to 46% of standard length → **3**
- 2b.** Lateral-line scales 52 to 56; pectoral-fin rays 16 to 22; head smaller, 34 to 38% of standard length → **4**
- 3a.** Dorsal fin with VIII spines and 12 soft rays; lateral-line scales 32; pectoral-fin rays 21; 5 suborbital spines on ridge of second and third infraorbital bones . . . *Brachybembras aschemeieri*
- 3b.** Dorsal fin with IX spines and 11 or 12 soft rays; lateral-line scales 28 to 29; pectoral-fin rays 25 to 30; 9 to 20 suborbital spines on ridge of second and third infraorbital bones *Bembradium furici*
- 4a.** Broad subterminal vertical band in caudal fin; 54 to 62 scale rows above lateral line *Bembras macrolepis*
- 4b.** Several narrow vertical bands in caudal fin or with a large dark spot, more densely pigmented in ventral lobe of fin; 77 to 85 scale rows above lateral line → **5**
- 5a.** Anal-fin rays 15; first gill arch with 3 or 4 gill rakers on upper limb *Bembras megacephala*
- 5b.** Anal-fin rays usually 13 or 14 (rarely 15); first gill arch with 1 or 2 gill rakers on upper limb → **6**
- 6a.** Pectoral fins with 16 to 18 rays (usually 17); ratio of pectoral-fin length to caudal-fin length 0.88 to 1.05 *Bembras japonica*
- 6b.** Pectoral fins with 17 to 19 rays (usually 18); ratio of pectoral-fin length to caudal-fin length 1.05 to 1.15 *Bembras longispinnis*

List of species occurring in the area

Bembradium furici Fourmanoir and Rivaton, 1979

Bembras japonica Cuvier, 1829

Bembras longispinnis Imamura and Knapp, 1998

Bembras macrolepis Imamura, 1998

Bembras megacephala Imamura and Knapp, 1998

Brachybembras aschemeieri Fowler, 1938

? *Parabembras curtus* (Temminck and Schlegel, 1843)^{1/}

Reference

Imamura, H. and L.W. Knapp. 1998. Review of the genus *Bembras* Cuvier, 1829 (Scorpaeniformes: Bembridae) with description of three new species collected from Australia and Indonesia. *Ichthyol. Res.*, 45(2):165-178.

^{1/} Reported from the area by some authors, but without documentation; no museum records have been located to confirm these reports.