

BEAUFORTIA

SERIES OF MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM - AMSTERDAM

No. 48

Volume 5

June 10, 1955

On a new and interesting Globe-fish from New Guinea *)

by

L. F. DE BEAUFORT

(Zoological Museum, Amsterdam)

MAX WEBER (1908, Nova Guinea, 5 (2): 264) referred 6 specimens of a globe-fish, collected by Dr. KOCH in the mouth of the Merauke River, New Guinea, to *Tetrodon staigeri* DE CASTELNAU. These specimens are in the Amsterdam Museum which later on received some more and still larger specimens from the same locality.

Re-examination of these specimens showed me that they cannot be referred to *T. staigeri*, which is said to be near *T. hispidus*, and hence, according to the classification of FRASER-BRUNNER (1943, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. (11) 10: 1), belongs to the family *Tetraodontidae*, whereas the Merauke specimens without doubt belong to the *Lagocephalidae*. It turned out that they belong to a new species,

Sphoeroides meraukensis nov. spec.

DIAGNOSIS: D. 2.8—2.9. A. 2.7—2.8. P. 1.17.1

Head 2.6—2.9 in standard length, 3.2—3.5 in length with caudal. Eye 5—8.5 in head, its lower border in level of corner of mouth, 2.9—5.2 in somewhat convex interorbital space and 1.8—3.1 in snout. No free orbital rim. Nasal organs above and slightly in front of eye, forming a well developed hollow papilla, pierced anteriorly by a round opening and posteriorly by a large one which has a rim or short tube, the lower interior half of which is longitudinally lamellated. Head, except snout, anterior half of cheeks, and chin covered with well developed prickles; these prickles extending on belly to anus and on back and sides to slightly behind extremity of pectorals; in young ones the prickles are hidden below the skin which is smooth on touch. Lips rather thick and strongly papillated. Upper lateral line encircling eye, those of both sides connected by a transverse line before nostrils; it runs along sides of back and is bent downwards below dorsal fin to the middle of the caudal peduncle, where it joins the lower lateral line. The lower lateral line can be traced from the corner of the mouth to below the base of the pectoral, where it is interrupted; it is continued at a variable distance from the end of its first

*) Received March 10, 1955.

part, runs along base of anal and then is bent upwards, joins the upper lateral line and is continued to base of caudal fin. A feeble fold along sides of tail, more distinct in young than in older specimens. Dorsal and anal truncate or slightly rounded, the longest dorsal rays 2.08—2.4 in head, the longest anal rays 2.1—2.5 in head. Caudal slightly rounded, truncate in small specimens. Least depth of caudal peduncle 1.67—2 in its length, measured from anal. Colour of preserved specimens lighter or darker greyish above, white or pinkish below. In young specimens upper part of head, back, and upper part of sides with smaller or larger black spots, disappearing with age. Nostrils white or pinkish. Upper part of pectoral base generally blackish. Fins light or dark brown or greyish. Length of largest specimen 235 mm.

Mr. FRASER-BRUNNER kindly examined one of the specimens and compared it on my request with *T. pleurostictus* GÜNTHER, because I supposed that the curious nasal organs of *meraukensis* were like those of GÜNTHER's species. Here follows what Mr. FRASER-BRUNNER wrote me in reply: "I have been looking into the question of the Tetraodont, and can assure you that it is not *T. pleurostictus* GÜNTHER. The nostrils are certainly very similar, and the presence of folds along the tail confirms that it is a *Torquigener*, but the lateral line arrangement resembles that of *Tetraodon*, the upper one bending down to meet the lower one. I am unable to find any species at all resembling it, and think you will be quite safe in describing it as new. If it belongs to *Torquigener* the definition of that genus will need to be modified".

As I do not favour the modern trend of splitting the old established genera into numerous small ones, I have ranged the new species under *Spherooides* "sensu latiore".