

A Larva of the Skilfish, *Erilepis zonifer* (Actinopterygii: Scorpaeniformes: Anoplopomatidae), from off Northeastern Japan

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A postflexion larva (15.6 mm standard length) of a skilfish, *Erilepis zonifer* (Lockington, 1880), is described from off Iwate, northeastern Japan. This is the first report of the larval stage of this species. The larva of *E. zonifer* is similar to that of the only confamilial species, the sablefish *Anoplopoma fimbria* (Pallas, 1814), in having a laterally compressed body, two dorsal fins, large pectoral fins, no head spination, and heavy pigmentation of the body and the distal part of the pectoral fin. The longer pectoral fin and deeper body of *E. zonifer*, coupled with distinctive meristic counts, separate the larvae of these two species of the family Anoplopomatidae.

Key Words: *Erilepis zonifer*, skilfish, Anoplopomatidae, fish larva, North Pacific.

Introduction

The North Pacific family Anoplopomatidae contains two species (Quast 1965; Mecklenburg 2003; Nelson 2006), *Anoplopoma fimbria* (Pallas, 1814) and *Erilepis zonifer* (Lockington, 1880). Of these, the sablefish *A. fimbria* grows to about 110 cm in total length (TL) and is economically important (e.g., Phillips 1958; Sasaki 1984, 1985); its early life stages have been described in detail (Kobayashi 1957; Ahlstrom and Stevens 1976; Kendall and Matarese 1987; Moser 1996). *Erilepis zonifer* is a rare species, reaching about 180 cm TL and a body weight of ca. 90 kg (Mecklenburg 2003). Although there are several reports of occurrences and general morphology based on adults (Tokranov and D'yakov 1996; Kim 2000), its larvae are unknown (Moser 1996). Recently, we isolated a postflexion larva of *E. zonifer* from an ichthyoplankton sample taken in the 1980s and stored in the collections of the National Fisheries Research Institute. Herein, we describe and illustrate this first larval specimen of *E. zonifer*.

Materials and Methods

The larva of 15.6 mm standard length was collected at 40°00'N, 149°00'E off Iwate Prefecture, northeastern Japan on 17 May 1989 by the Tohoku National Fish-