

# *Platycephalus clavulatus* Cantor, 1849 (Teleostei: Platycephalidae), a Junior Synonym of *Cociella punctata* (Cuvier, 1829)

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The validity of the platycephalid species *Platycephalus clavulatus* Cantor, 1849, described from a single specimen collected in the sea of Pinang (=Penang), Malaysia, is evaluated. Although it has been suggested that the holotype of the species is a specimen registered as BMNH 1860.3.19.270 in the Natural History Museum, London (BMNH), which is identifiable as *Cociella punctata* (Cuvier, 1829), the total length (TL) of the holotype reported by Cantor is 57/8 inches (=149 mm), significantly longer than the damaged BMNH specimen, which is estimated to have had a TL of 121 mm. According to the original description of *P. clavulatus*, the holotype has 11 second dorsal and anal fin rays, one preorbital spine, and two suborbital spines, values which agree with those of *C. punctata*, a species widely distributed in the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, including Penang. Although these characters are also present in *Cociella crocodila* (Cuvier, 1829), that species is known only from Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan. We conclude that *P. clavulatus* is conspecific with *C. punctata* and is a junior synonym of that species.

**Key Words:** *Platycephalus clavulatus*, taxonomic validity, synonymy, *Cociella punctata*.

## Introduction

*Platycephalus clavulatus* was originally described by Cantor (1849) based on a single specimen collected from the sea of Pinang (=Penang), Malaysia. Since the original description, no author has attempted to redescribe it or discuss its taxonomic status, nor has the name of the species appeared in recent publications. Although Eschmeyer (1998) declared the whereabouts of the holotype to be unknown, he subsequently (Eschmeyer 2012) suggested that BMNH 1860.3.19.270 may be the holotype. BMNH 1860.3.19.270, a

dry specimen retaining only the left side of the body (Fig. 1), was recorded as being collected in Penang (Fig. 2). It is identifiable as *Cociella punctata* (Cuvier in Cuvier and Valenciennes, 1829), widely known from the western Pacific and Indian oceans, based on the diagnostic characters of the species presented below. However, its status as type of *P. clavulatus* remains unclear, as its total length (TL) is estimated to have been 121 mm (see discussion below), while the TL of Cantor's (1849) holotype was stated to be 57/8 inches (=149 mm). After detailed comparison of the original description of *P. clavulatus* with species known from Penang and adjacent waters, we have concluded that the former is



Fig. 1. Lateral view of BMNH 1860.3.19.270, collected at Pinang (=Penang), Malaysia, identified here as *Cociella punctata*.