Acta Ichthyologica et Piscatoria 55, 2025, 93–99 | DOI 10.3897/aiep.55.146367

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ACTA ICHTHYOLOGICA ET PISCATORIA

First record of *Engyprosopon hureaui* (Actinopterygii, Pleuronectiformes, Bothidae) from Taiwan, with a revised key to *Engyprosopon* in Taiwan

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https://zoobank.org/2F11EB53-2EBC-4932-9CBD-A58D8EE95394

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Academic editor: Ronald Fricke ♦ **Received** 10 January 2025 ♦ **Accepted** 17 January 2025 ♦ **Published** 24 April 2025

Citation: Su Y, Cheng Y-N, Shyu J-F (2025) First record of *Engyprosopon hureaui* (Actinopterygii, Pleuronectiformes, Bothidae) from Taiwan, with a revised key to *Engyprosopon* in Taiwan. Acta Ichthyologica et Piscatoria 55: 93–99. https://doi.org/10.3897/aiep.55.146367

Abstract

The Hureau's flounder, *Engyprosopon hureaui* Quéro et Golani, 1990 is first recorded from Taiwan based on a female specimen and fresh photographs of an unretained specimen. Even though it has been recorded from sparse localities in the Indo–West Pacific, it has never been recorded from Taiwan. The presently reported specimen fills the distribution gap in the northwestern Pacific Ocean between Japan and New Caledonia. A detailed description of the specimen is provided and compared to data of other specimens, with morphological variations noted. Additionally, a revised key to the 12 species of *Engyprosopon* from Taiwan is provided.

Keywords

biodiversity, biogeography, flatfish, ichthyology, morphology, taxonomy

Introduction

The flatfish genus *Engyprosopon* Günther, 1862 is the most specious genus within the family Bothidae, with 35 species currently recognized as valid (Amaoka and Ho 2022; Fricke et al. 2025). They are characterized by having the following combination of characters: anterior tip of isthmus below about middle of the lower eye; interorbital space usually concave and wider in males than in females; scales on ocular side large and bearing short and feeble ctenii; caudal skeleton (plates) with deep clefts; and the blind side of the body usually with dark pigments in males (Amaoka 1969; Amaoka et al. 1993; Amaoka and Ho 2018, 2019).

Among congeners, *Engyprosopon hureaui* Quéro et Golani, 1990 was originally described based on specimens collected from the Red Sea (Quéro and Golani 1990). Thereafter, it has been recorded from scattered localities in the Indo–West Pacific region, including the Maldives, Australia, New Caledonia, and Japan (Amaoka et al. 1993; Amaoka and Kishimoto 1996; Anderson et al. 1998; Hoese and Bray 2006). It is characterized by having the caudal fin without black blotches, interorbital space without distinct cross bands, gill rakers on first arch 0 + 6–8 and not serrated, teeth in upper jaw uniserial, lower-jaw length 9.3%–13.0% standard length, ocular side pectoral fin 1.2–1.3 in head length (Quéro and Golani 1990; Amaoka et al. 1993, 2008; Hensley and Amaoka 2001, 2022).

An extensive survey of bycatch fishes collected during the fishery of silver-stripe round herring, *Spratelloides gracilis* (Temminck et Schlegel, 1846), at Chi-kan, northern Penghu, conducted between 2021 and 2024, has yielded both new species and new distributional records (e.g., Chou 2021; Su et al. 2024; Hibino and Ho 2024). Among them, a flatfish specimen was collected and subsequently identified as *E. hureaui* based on the aforementioned characteristics. This finding confirms the hypothesis proposed by Su et al. (2024) that this species occurs in Taiwan. The presently reported specimen represents the first record from Taiwan and fills the distribution gap of this species in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. Additionally, a revised key to species of *Engyprosopon* from Taiwan is provided.

Materials and methods

The specimen was fixed in 4% formaldehyde and subsequently transferred to 70% ethanol for preservation and deposited in the Pisces Collection of the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium, Pingtung, Taiwan (NMMB-P).

Methods for counts and measurements follow Hubbs and Lagler (1974) and Amaoka et al. (1993). The number of caudal-fin rays is presented as upper unbranched rays + middle branched rays + lower unbranched rays. The number of gill rakers was taken from the outer face of the first gill arch on the ocular side, with the raker at the angle included in the lower-raker count. The number of lateral-line scales are presented as: scales before caudal-fin base + scales on caudal-fin base. Scale pockets were adopted when scales were detached. The vertebral formula was determined using X-radiographs taken by a digital X-ray machine set up in the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium. Measurements were taken using digital calipers rounding to the nearest 0.1 mm under a stereomicroscope. Morphometric data were expressed as ratios and/or percentages of standard length (SL) and head length (HL), except where otherwise indicated. Data of other specimens were retrieved from Quéro and Golani (1990), Amaoka et al. (1993), and Amaoka (2016).

Results

Family Bothidae

Engyprosopon hureaui Quéro et Golani, 1990

English name: Hureau's flounder

Chinese name: 圓頭短額鮃

Figs. 1, 2; Tables 1, 2.

Engyprosopon hureaui Quéro et Golani, 1990.—Quéro and Golani (1990): 38, fig. 1. (Type locality: North Beach, Eilat, Israel, Gulf of Aqaba, Red Sea, depth 1–1.5 m; holotype: HUJ 12563).—Amaoka et al. (1993): 402 (description; New Caledonia).—Goren and Dor (1994): 71 (listed, Red Sea).—Amaoka and Kishimoto (1996): 2 (first record from Japan).—Anderson et al. (1998): 28 (Maldive Islands).—Hensley and Amaoka (2001): 3830 (listed; western central Pacific).—Nakabo (2002): 1363 (in key, Japan).—Hoese and Bray in Hoese et al. (2006): 1818 (listed, Australia).—Amaoka et al. (2008): 113 (in key, Japan).—Nakabo and Doiuchi in Nakabo (2013): 1667 (in key, Japan).—Amaoka (2016): 96 (description; Japan).—Golani and Fricke (2018): 173 (listed, Red Sea).—Hensley and Amaoka (2022): 336 (description; western Indian Ocean).—Motomura (2023): 225 (listed, Tanegashima Island, Japan).

Scaeops maldevensis (non Regan).—Regan (1908): 234 (four types were reidentified as *E. hureaui* by Amaoka et al. 1993).

Specimen examined. NMMB-P 41171, female, 40.6 mm SL, off Chi-kan, Bai-sha, northern Penghu, Taiwan Strait, ca. 23°39′58.2″N, 119°36′25.9″E, 16 Aug. 2024, coll. H.-W. Chen, L.-A. Chen, and R.-L. Quin.

Description of Taiwanese specimen. Meristic and morphometric data are provided in Tables 1, 2.

Dorsal-fin rays 74. Anal-fin rays 51. Caudal-fin rays 3 + 11 + 3. Pectoral-fin rays 11 and 9 on ocular and blind sides, respectively. Pelvic-fin rays 6 on both ocular and blind sides. Gill rakers on first arch 0 + 6 = 6. Lateral-line scales ca. 38, not including 3 scales on caudal fin. Vertebrae 10 + 23 = 33.

Body oval, greatest depth 1.7 in SL; its dorsal and ventral profiles convex and nearly symmetric. Head length 3.8 in SL; anterior profile of head rounded, and no distinct notch above snout. Snout length 4.6 in HL, distinctly shorter than both eyes. Rostral spine present on snout. Eyes sinistral, upper- and lower-eye diameter 3.3 and 3.5 in HL, respectively; anterior margin of both eyes at same vertical level. No orbital spines and ocular flaps. Interorbital space concave, its width 4.5 in HL. Two nostrils on ocular side, with anterior nostril forming tube, and situated on snout behind rostral spine; posterior nostril forming single pore, situated anterior to lower eye. Two nostrils on blind side, both minute, with anterior one forming short tube and posterior one forming pore; both situated below base of first dorsal-fin ray.

Mouth oblique and small; ocular-side upper-jaw length 3.0 in HL; its anterior tip slightly posterior to lower-jaw tip when closed; its posterior tip reaching vertical through anterior margin of lower eye. Upper- and lower-jaw teeth uniserial on both ocular and blind sides. Gill rakers present on outer-three arches; those on first arch smooth, not serrated on inner sides; those on first and second arches laterally compressed, and subequal in size; those on third arch shorter than that of first and second; no rakers on upper limb of all four arches. Scales deciduous on both ocular and blind sides; those on ocular side ctenoid, with very short ctenii; those on blind side cycloid; no scales on snout and both jaws on ocular side.

Dorsal-fin origin at horizontal through upper margin of lower eye; anterior rays not elongated; longest ray at point slightly posterior to vertical through midline of body. Anal-fin origin at vertical through ocular-side pectoral-fin origin; its shape nearly subsymmetrical to dorsal fin. Pectoral fin on ocular side not elongated, length 1.4 in HL; pectoral fin on blind side shorter than that of ocular side, length 1.9 in HL. Pelvic-fin origin on ocular side at tip of isthmus; pelvic-fin origin on blind side opposite to fifth ray of ocular-side pelvic fin. Tip of isthmus at vertical through middle of lower eye. Caudal fin rounded, slightly pointed, length 1.0 in HL. All rays simple except for middle 11 caudal-fin rays branched.

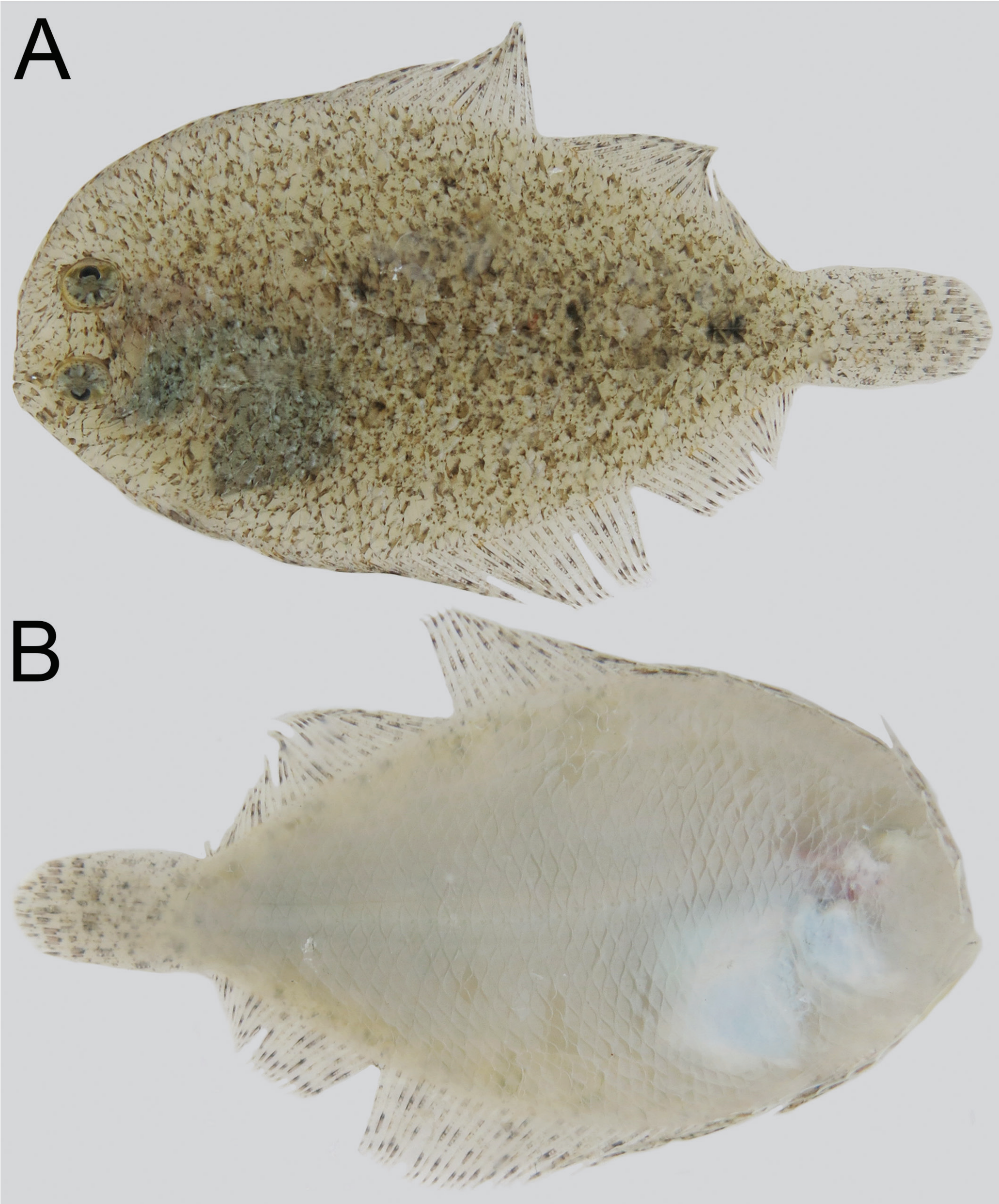

Figure 1. Fresh unretained specimen of *Engyprosopon hureaui* collected from Chi-kan fishing port, Penghu Islands. (**A**) Ocular side. (**B**) Blind side.

Table 1. Meristic characters of *Engyprosopon hureaui* from Taiwan.

Character	This study NMMB-P 41171	Quéro and Golani 1990 HT; PT (*n* = 11)	Amaoka et al. 1993 (*n* = 8)	Amaoka and Kishimoto 1996 (*n* = 2)	Amaoka 2016
Sex	F	6 M; 5 F	4 M; 4 F	2 F	
Dorsal-fin rays	74	73–77	76–78	72–74	72–78
Pectoral-fin rays (O)	11	10–11	10–12	10	10–12
Pectoral-fin rays (B)	9	7–9	9–10	7–8	7–10
Pelvic-fin rays (O)	6	—	6	6	—
Pelvic-fin rays (B)	6	—	6	6	—
Anal-fin rays	51	52–57	55–58	53–54	53–58
Caudal-fin rays	3 + 11 + 3	—	3 + 11–12 + 2–3	3 + 11 + 3	—
Gill rakers	0 + 6	0 + 6–7	0 + 7–8	0 + 7	0 + 7–8
Lateral-line scales	ca. 38 + 3	36–41	36–40	39	36–40
Vertebrae	10 + 23 = 33	—	10 + 22–24 = 32–34	10 + 23 = 33	10 + 22–24 = 32–34

B = blind side, F = female, M = male, O = ocular side.

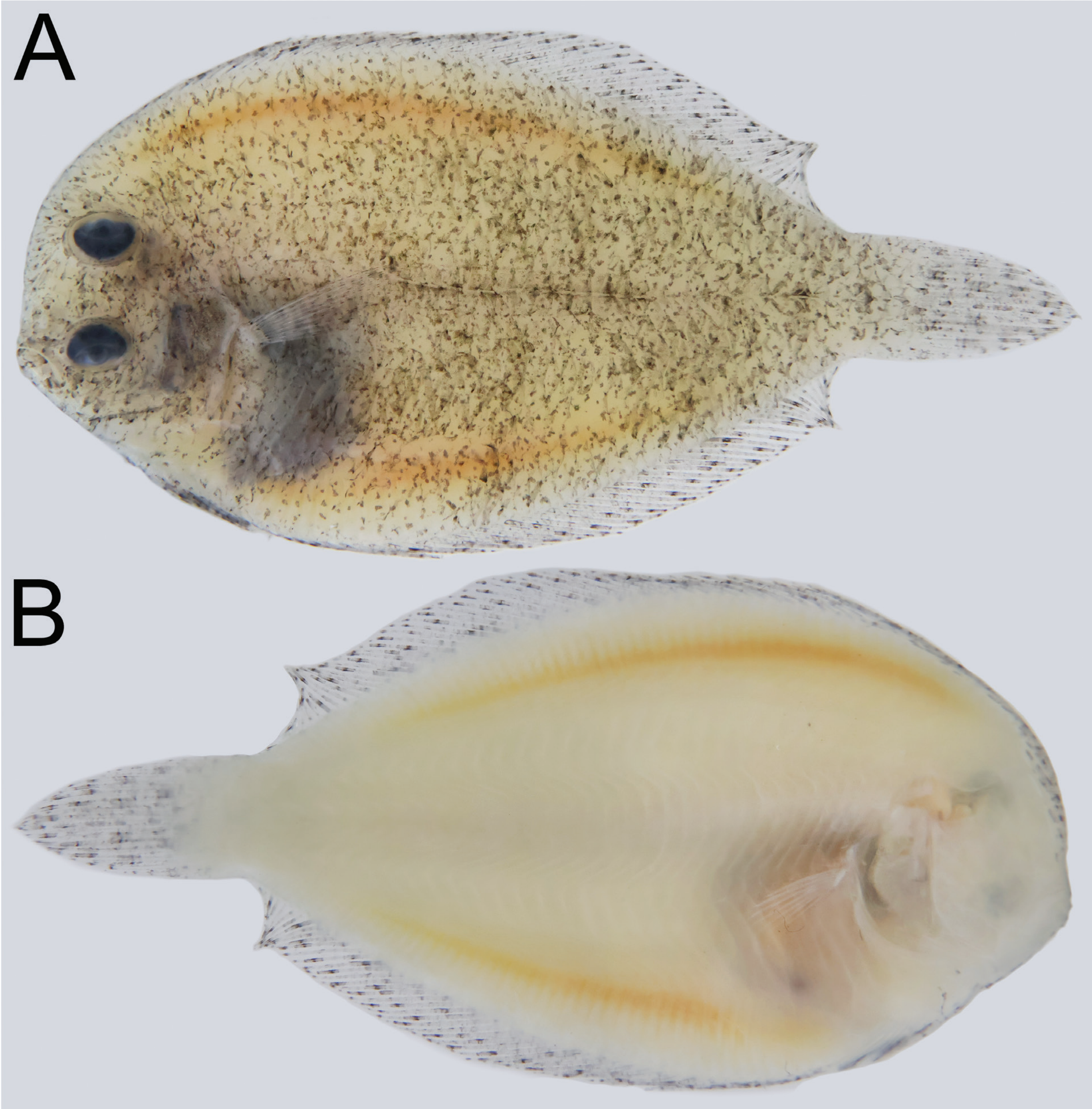

Figure 2. Preserved specimen of *Engyprosopon hureaui*, NMMB-P 41171, 40.6 mm SL, female. (**A**) Ocular side. (**B**) Blind side.

Coloration. When fresh (Fig. 1): ocular-side body uniformly yellowish, scattered with irregularly-shaped brown spots; all fins scattered with brown spots similar to that on body; blind side body pale, slightly yellowish, with peritoneum and opercular region paler and lighter than rest.

When preserved (Fig. 2): coloration similar to fresh; ocular-side body uniformly pale and scattered with irregularly-shaped dark spots, all spots smaller than pupil; all fins scattered with dark spots similar to that on body; blind side uniformly pale.

Distribution. Known from scattered localities in the Indo–West Pacific, including Gulf of Aqaba (type locality), Maldives (Regan 1908; Anderson et al. 1998), New Caledonia (Amaoka et al. 1993), Australia (Hoese and Bray 2006), and southern Japan (Amaoka and Kishimoto 1996; Motomura 2023). Inhabits at depths of 1–81 m (Amaoka et al. 1993). Our specimen represents the first record from Taiwan and fills the distribution gap of this species in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. The specimen was collected within the silver-stripe round herring (*Spratelloides gracilis*) fishery, and other non-target species such as *Parapriacanthus ransonneti* Steindachner, 1870, *Upeneus heterospinus* Uiblein et Pavlov, 2019, and *Parapercis pulchella* Temminck et Schlegel, 1843, at depths not exceeding 30 m.

Discussion

The presently reported specimen is identified as *Engyprosopon hureaui* in having: anterior margin of head rounded, without distinct notch; upper-jaw teeth uniserial; rakers on first gill arch 0 + 6 = 6, and not serrated in the inner edge; lateral-line scales ca. 38 + 3; ocular-side

Table 2. Morphometric characters of *Engyprosopon hureaui* from Taiwan.

Character	This study NMMB-P 41171	Quéro and Golani 1990 HT; PT (*n* = 11)	Amaoka et al. 1993 (*n* = 8)	Amaoka and Kishimoto 1996 (*n* = 2)
Sex	F	6 M; 5 F	4 M; 4 F	2 F
Absolute values [mm]				
SL (mm)	40.6	37.0–57.0	28.5–49.8	23.7–26.8
Relative values [%SL]				
HL	26.6	26.1–30.2	26.3–28.8	28.0–28.7
Body depth	59.6	49.5–56.1	51.7–56.0	52.7–53.4
Snout length	5.7	—	4.0–6.6	—
Upper-eye diameter	8.0	—	7.2–9.5	—
Lower-eye diameter	7.6	—	7.2–10.2	—
Interorbital width (M)	—	4.9–7.0	7.6–8.6	—
Interorbital width (F)	5.9	2.7–4.0	3.5–5.2	—
Upper-jaw length (O)	8.8	—	8.8–9.8	—
Upper-jaw length (B)	8.5	—	8.1–12.5	—
Lower-jaw length (O)	11.9	10.0–12.6	9.3–13.0	—
Lower-jaw length (B)	12.6	—	12.0–13.7	—
Caudal-peduncle depth	13.7	12.4–15.1	12.5–13.9	13.1–13.8
Pectoral-fin length (O)	19.5	18.6–22.6	20.3–23.2	20.5–22.4
Pectoral-fin length (B)	14.3	12.4–16.1	12.2–14.1	11.8–11.9
Pelvic-fin base (O)	11.7	—	12.5–14.2	—
Pelvic-fin base (B)	4.3	—	4.0–4.9	—
Longest dorsal-fin ray	16.0	—	14.0–17.1	—
Longest anal-fin ray	15.1	—	15.0–18.6	—
Caudal-fin length	25.4	—	24.2	22.8–25.7

B = blind side, F = female, HL = head length, M = male, O = ocular side, SL = standard length.

lower-jaw length 11.9%SL; and distal margin of caudal fin without blotches (Amaoka et al. 1993; Hensley and Amaoka 2001; Nakabo and Doiuchi 2013).

Compared to the data from other specimens (Quéro and Golani 1990; Amaoka et al. 1993; Amaoka and Kishimoto 1996; Amaoka 2016; Tables 1, 2), the presently reported specimen aligns closely with previously documented characteristics. However, our specimen exhibits slightly fewer anal-fin rays (51, vs. 52–58), slightly higher body depth (59.6%SL, vs. 49.5%–56.1%SL), slightly longer interorbital width (5.9%SL, vs. 2.7%–5.2%), and slightly shorter ocular-side pelvic-fin base (11.7%SL, vs. 12.5%–14.2%SL). These minor differences are considered intraspecific variations.

Key to species of *Engyprosopon* from Taiwan (modified from Amaoka and Ho 2018)

Currently, 12 species of *Engyprosopon* are known from Taiwanese waters (Amaoka and Ho 2022; this study): *Engyprosopon brevifrontale* Amaoka et Ho, 2018, *Engyprosopon grandisquama* (Temminck et Schlegel, 1846), *Engyprosopon hureaui*, *Engyprosopon keliaoense* Amaoka et Ho, 2022, *Engyprosopon longipelvis* Amaoka, 1969, *Engyprosopon macrolepis* (Regan, 1908), *Engyprosopon maldivense* (Regan, 1908), *Engyprosopon mogkii* (Bleeker, 1854), *Engyprosopon mozambiquense* Hensley, 2003, *Engyprosopon multisquama* Amaoka, 1963, *Engyprosopon parvipectorale* Amaoka et Ho, 2018, *Engyprosopon xystrias* Hubbs, 1915. Three species, *Engyprosopon brevifrontale*, *Engyprosopon keliaoense*, and *Engyprosopon parvipectorale* were originally described from Taiwan. A key to the 12 species is provided below:

1A Distal half of caudal fin with a pair of black blotches **2**
1B Distal half of caudal fin without a pair of black blotches **5**
2A Gill rakers 0 + 13 .... ***E. xystrias***
2B Gill rakers 0–3 + 5–11 .... **3**
3A Body rather elongate, depth 1.87–2.03 in SL; ocular-side pectoral-fin rays filamentous and longer than head length .... ***E. multisquama***
3B Body oval, depth 1.63–1.86 in SL; ocular-side pectoral-fin rays not filamentous, usually shorter than head length **4**
4A Lateral-line scales 37–45; upper-eye diameter 7.0%–9.3% SL; interorbital width 7.4%–10.2% and 3.9%–6.7% SL in males and females, respectively .... ***E. grandisquama***
4B Lateral-line scales 46–51; upper-eye diameter 6.6%–6.9% SL; interorbital width 3.8%–4.1% and 2.5%–3.1% SL in males and females, respectively .... ***E. keliaoense***

5A Inner edges of gill rakers on first arch smooth; ocular-side upper-jaw length 2.0–3.0 in HL **6**
5B Inner edges of gill rakers on first arch serrated; ocular-side upper-jaw length 1.5–2.0 in HL **10**
6A Upper-jaw teeth uniserial...**7**
6B Upper-jaw teeth biserial...**8**
7A Interorbital space with distinct dark cross bands; anterior margin of head with a distinct notch; lateral-line scales 40–52 ....***E. macrolepis***
7B Interorbital space without distinct dark cross bands; anterior margin of head rounded, without notch; lateral-line scales 36–41..***E. hureaui***
8A Interorbital space narrow, width 7.8–12.5 in HL; lateral-line scales 50–51; gill rakers 0 + 6–8 ....***E. mogkii***
8B Interorbital space wide, width 1.7–3.9 in HL; lateral-line scales 43–48; gill rakers 0–3 + 8–11.......................**9**
9A Eyes placed away from head margin; upper eye small, diameter 3.1–4.0 in HL; caudal-peduncle depth 1.8–2.1 in HL; body depth 1.8–2.1 in SL ....***E. maldivense***
9B Eyes placed near to head margin; upper eye large, diameter 2.7–2.9 in HL; caudal-peduncle depth 2.2–2.3 in HL; body depth ca. 1.7 in SL...***E. brevifrontale***
10A Lateral-line scales 37–40; ocular-side pelvic-fin rays elongated in males, 1.7–1.8 in HL; ocular-side pelvic-fin membrane with many black spots in males .... ***E. longipelvis***
10B Lateral-line scales 46–52; ocular-side pelvic-fin rays not elongated in both sex, 1.9–3.0 in HL; ocular-side pelvic-fin membrane without many black spots in both sexes **11**
11A Eyes separated, with interorbital space narrow and concave in both sexes; eyes large, upper-eye diameter 3.0–3.5 in HL; anterior upper-jaw teeth not enlarged; blind side of body dark in males.............***E. mozambiquense***
11B Eyes nearly contiguous, with interorbital space extremely narrow, almost filled entirely by a bony ridge in both sexes; eyes small, upper-eye diameter 3.8–4.3 in HL; anterior upper-jaw teeth enlarged and canine; blind side of body not dark in both sexes... ***E. parvipectorale***

Acknowledgments

We thank team members of Fish Says (Ocean Friends, Co. Ltd.) for assistance in sample collection and taking photographs; K. Amaoka (Hokkaido University) for assistance in identification and providing literature; H.-C. Ho (NKUST) for providing facilities and resource materials and reading and giving critical comments to the manuscript; M-H. Chiang (NMMBA) for taking X-radiographs; P.-N. Lee (NMMBA) for curatorial assistance; and Y.-C. Hsu (NSYSU) for various assistance. This study was supported by National Penghu University of Science and Technology, Penghu, Taiwan, and National Kaohsiung University of Science Technology, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

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