

AULOPIFORMES – lizardfishes and allies

Most of the aulopiform fishes inhabits marine waters, including the deep-seas. Within the Aulopiformes, only a few species of the family Synodontidae can enter brackish estuaries. Such examples include some species of *Synodus* and *Harpadon*;

actually, fishes of the latter genus are found in the Mekong estuaries. Its unique appearance (particularly in the strange "face") is readily distinguished *Harpadon* from the other Mekong fishes.

***Harpadon nehereus* (Hamilton, 1822)**

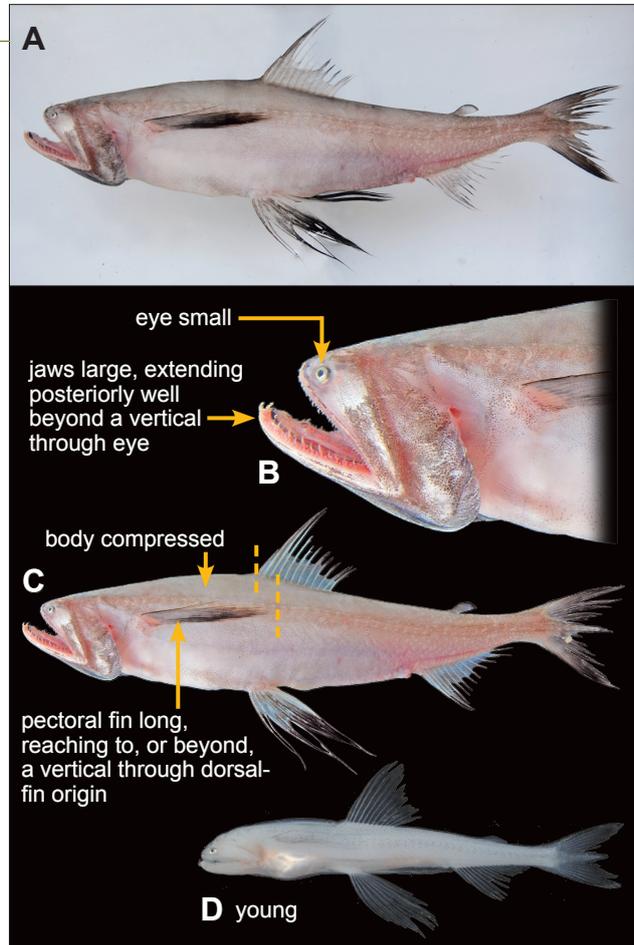
Family: Synodontidae (FC: 187)

Size: 40 cm SL (Russell, 1999: 1936).

Distribution: Mekong Basin in Vietnam; Indo-West Pacific.

Notes: A medium-sized species of *Harpadon*, found in coastal waters with muddy bottoms; it also commonly enters brackish estuaries. The dried fish of *Harpadon nehereus* is very common in the delta region of Vietnam (see photograph below), and is almost always seen at the local market; freshly-collected fish are also common in the market around the coastal region (photo E).

Harpadon comprises about 4 species, and 3 of them are known from the western Pacific. Vidthayanon (2008: 284) recorded 2 species of *Harpadon*, viz., *H. nehereus* and *H. translucens*, from the Mekong Delta, but the record of the latter needs confirmation; *H. translucens* was previously known only from Papua New Guinea and northern Australia (e.g., Russell, 1999). *Harpadon nehereus* is readily distinguished from *H. translucens* by having much longer pectoral fin, extending to, or beyond, a vertical line through dorsal-fin origin (vs. much shorter, reaching well before a vertical line through dorsal-fin origin in *H. translucens*).



A-C) CTU-P 5218 (photo: HVM); D) CTU-P 1298 (photo: LXT); E) marketed fish (Bến Tre Province, Vietnam, photo: KS)



Dried fish of *Harpadon nehereus* (Cần Thơ, Vietnam, photo: KS)