

# THE SCALELESS DRAGONFISH, *MELANOSTOMIAS VALDIVIAE* BRAUER, 1902, NEW TO THE FISH FAUNA OF ATLANTIC CANADA

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## Introduction

A specimen of *Melanostomias valdiviae* (Family Stomiidae) 226 mm standard length, 241 mm total length was caught in a midwater trawl at about 500 meters southwest of Sable Island, Nova Scotia (42°08'09"N, 62°59'00"W) on 3 February 1982 at 2200 hours. This is the first record of this species from Canada (Leim and Scott, 1966; Morrow and Gibbs, 1964; Parin and Pokhil'skaya, 1978). The specimen is catalogued in the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa under NMC84-0279.

## Description

The body is elongate and moderately compressed, greatest depth in standard length (SL) 9.0. The caudal peduncle is short and slender. The head length (HL) is 7.4 in SL, the eye is large (fleshy orbit 5.7 in HL) and the snout is shorter than the bony or fleshy orbit (5.9 in HL). The interorbital distance is 4.4 in HL. The mouth is large; snout to end of upper jaw is 1.1 in HL. The preanal and predorsal fin lengths are equal, 1.2 in SL. The prepelvic length is 1.5 in SL. The pectoral and pelvic fins are 2.6 and 1.0 in HL respectively. The barbel is 1.4 in HL. Its tip is slightly damaged but distally it is flattened with its length about twice its width. There appears to be one oval body on each side of the main stem. Jaw teeth are long and depressible. There are 7 teeth on the premaxilla, 6 on the anterior maxilla, 9 or 10 on each mandible, two pairs of teeth on the basibranchials, one on each side of the vomer and 4 or 5 on the palatines. The dorsal fin has 15 rays, the anal fin 19 rays, the pelvic fin 7 and the pectoral fin 5 rays. The dorsal, caudal, anal and pelvic fin rays are finely toothed laterally. The row of photophores from the isthmus to pectoral fin insertion (IP) numbers 8 followed by a gap and then 2 before the pectoral fin, the row from pectoral to pelvic fin insertion (PV) is 27, pelvic fin insertion to above anterior anal fin ray (VAV) is 14, from above anterior anal fin rays to end of row (AC) 10, the lateral row behind the opercle to above the pelvic fin insertion (OV) 26, and the lateral row from above the pelvic fin insertion to the end of the row above the anal fin (VAL) 12. The large, triangular photophore behind the eye is 7.1 in HL. Vertebrae number 53 including the urostyle. The specimen is a female. The head, body and fins are a deep brown in preservative, and from a distance the specimen appears black. The barbel has a pigmented stem.

This description agrees with those given in Regan and Trewavas (1930), Morrow and Gibbs (1964) and Parin and Pokhil'skaya (1978).

## Distinctions

This species is distinguished from other North Atlantic *Melanostomias* by the flattened and expanded distal part of the barbel with a central stem and 2 or more

luminous ovoid bodies on either or both sides of this stem. The expanded part of the barbel tip is about twice as wide as its length, and the free end may be pointed but is never a long filament. Morrow and Gibbs (1964) illustrate variations in barbel structure.

#### Range

Known from the western North Atlantic Ocean between about 8° and 42°N, including the Gulf of Mexico, eastern and central North Atlantic from about 30°N to 52°N, South Atlantic from about 10°S to 40°S, and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This specimen is the first recorded in Canadian waters. Another specimen (Huntsman Marine Laboratory, catalogue no. H15781) was taken by the *Lady Hammond* off Nova Scotia outside Canadian waters at 40°10.63'N, 61°13.26'W on 18 February at 2330 hours in an Engel midwater trawl at 300 meters depth.

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#### References

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