

SARSIA



CRYPTOPSARAS COUESI GILL, 1883, A DEEP-SEA FISH NEW TO NORWEGIAN WATERS

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Three specimens of *Cryptopsaras couesi* have been recorded from Norwegian waters, one in 1992, one in 1993 and one in 1995. These are the first records east of the Shetland-Faroe Channel, although the species is recorded regularly from west and northwest Icelandic waters. Two of the specimens were taken in commercial fish trawls at depths of 450 to 600 m along the Norwegian continental slope and one specimen at Bear Island.

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In April 1995 a strange, black fish was caught pelagically during a trawling survey for greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*) at 450 m depth northwest of the Trøndelag coast (65°43'N, 06°34'E). Later it transpired that an earlier specimen had been caught in a trawl near Haltenbanken, 65°41'N, 09°00'E, at a depth of 450-470 m and sent to Tor J. Samuelsen.

The species in question is *Cryptopsaras couesi*, a deep-water fish belonging to the family Ceratiidae of the deep-sea anglerfish group. The female can reach a length of 60-70 cm. The much smaller male is free-living until a length of about 1 cm whereafter it attaches itself to the ventral part of the female. These parasitic males do not exceed 7.3 cm (WHITEHEAD & al. 1986). The female has a large head with a big, elastic mouth containing small, very sharp teeth. The eyes are tiny and nearly invisible. The first spine on the dorsal fin is transformed into a bulbous tip, a bait device, like that found in *Lophius piscatorius*, but here probably luminous. There are three warts in front of the dorsal fin. As in most deep sea fishes, the colour of the body is black.

C. couesi is cosmopolitan with several records in the Atlantic, including larvae and males, from off Madeira,

the Azores and Gibraltar (WHITEHEAD & al. 1986). Females are regularly caught in Icelandic waters (JÓNSSON 1992). In Iceland it was first found on 1 February 1914 off the Vestmanna Islands (SÆMUNDSSON 1926). Since 1914 the species has been recorded more than 40 times off the western part of Iceland and north to Húnaflóa and there have been annual catches since 1985 (JÓNSSON 1992). Some specimens have been found east of Ammassalik and off the southwest coast of Greenland (NIELSEN & BERTELSEN 1992). PETHON (1994) reports it from Bear Island in the Barents Sea, 1992. SÆMUNDSSON (1926) reports most of the cosmopolitic finds to be at depths between 600 and 3000 m.

The three dorsal warts have given the fish the name 'trevortet storangler' (three-warted great angler) in Danish. Other common names are 'lesser deep-sea angler', Canadian English; 'warted sea-devil', American; 'petit pecheur abyssal', French; 'surtur' (the black one), in Icelandic. PETHON (1994) has proposed 'liten sjødjevel' (small sea-devil) in Norwegian.

The three specimens reported here, taken far to the east and north of the main area of distribution, have probably missed the sea current going northwest be-

fore the Shetland-Faroe Channel and then been brought by the drift through the Channel into the North Sea before being carried north along the Norwegian continental slope. The two specimens brought to our attention were females, measuring respectively 37 and 28.5 cm and weighed 900 and 1130 g. They have been deposited in the collections of the Institute of Natural History, Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, N-7004 Trondheim, Norway.

The type of fishing gear used may cause the small, 10 mm long, males to be torn away from the females when they are covered by the commercial fish species during hauling.

There is little information about the diet. SÆMUNDSSON (1926) found a 12 cm long unidentified fish, probably an *Argentina silus* (op. cit.), in the stomach of the 30-40 cm long specimen found by him in 1914. The specimen from 1995 was caught when fishing for smelt, *A. silus*. JÓNSSON (1992) gives the northernmost record for a species found at a shrimp fishing area north of Húnaflóa.

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