



A new species of the worm-eel genus *Neenchelys* (Anguilliformes: Ophichthidae) from southern Taiwan

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Abstract

A new ophichthid worm-eel, *Neenchelys gracilis* sp. nov., is described from a specimen collected from southwestern Taiwan. It differs from its congeners by having: a minute pectoral fin, many filamentous cirri on the anterior nostril rim; a very slender body; a very small gill opening; and a vertebral formula of 30-78-200.

Key words: Pisces, Anguilliformes, Ophichthidae, Myrophinae, Taiwan

Introduction

Ho *et al.* (2013) recognized nine species in their revision of the worm eel genus *Neenchelys*. Six of them were found in Taiwanese waters. They also predicted that the diversity of *Neenchelys* may be higher. However, their three new species are not available (Tashiro *et al.*, 2015) and a renaming action is provided in the present issue (Ho *et al.*, 2015).

In a recent visit to the fish landing at Dong-gang, southwestern Taiwan, the senior author discovered a very slender specimen of a *Neenchelys* that has two preopercular pores and its posterior nostril within an elongate slit in its upper lip. The specimen has several unique characters that separate it from all of its congeners. It is described herein as a new species of *Neenchelys*.

Method and material

Methods for taking morphometric measurements and meristics follow Ho *et al.* (2013). The type specimen is deposited at the Pisces Collection of National Museum of Marine Biology & Aquarium (NMMB-P). Materials examined and data for comparison are those listed in Ho *et al.* (2013).

Results

Neenchelys gracilis sp. nov.

New English name: Fringe-nose worm-eel

Figures 1A–B, 2A–B; Tables 1

Holotype. NMMB-P 22195, 429 mm TL, off Dong-gang, Pingtung, S Taiwan, N South China Sea, *ca.* 400 m depth, 1 Nov. 2014.

Diagnosis. A species of *Neenchelys* with a minute pectoral fin, many filamentous cirri on anterior nostril rim, and a very small gill opening (3.8% HL). It can be further distinguished by the following combination of