

## ***Bothrocara nyx*: a new species of eelpout (Perciformes: Zoarcidae) from the Bering Sea**

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### **Abstract**

A new species of eelpout, *Bothrocara nyx*, is described from the eastern Bering Sea slope on the basis of 142 specimens collected during bottom trawl surveys conducted from 2000 through 2004. This species has a small maximum size, a short snout, a relatively low number of small vomerine and palatine teeth, a high number of gill rakers, and a heavily pigmented mouth and gill chamber. It is similar to *B. pusillum*, but differs in the number of gill rakers, and in the morphology of gill rakers and pectoral fins. It can be distinguished from all other congeners on the basis of morphometric and meristic characters.

**Key words:** North Pacific, Bering Sea, taxonomy, Zoarcoidei, Zoarcidae, new species

### **Introduction**

The zoarcid genus *Bothrocara* Bean, 1890, includes several species of deepwater eelpouts distributed primarily along the North Pacific rim. Anderson (1994) recognized at least seven species, with the status of three nominal forms uncertain. He considered the genus to be the most primitive member of a “*Bothrocara*-group clade” including *Bothrocara*, *Bothrocarina*, *Lycogrammoides*, and *Lycodapus* (Anderson, 1994: fig. 16). *Bothrocara* is distinguished within the Zoarcidae by the absence of pelvic fins, absence of an oral valve, the number of suborbital bones (7–9), a weak palatopterygoid series, and a wide gill opening with a very narrow isthmus.

At least two species of *Bothrocara*, *B. brunneum* (Bean) and *B. pusillum* (Bean), are found in the eastern Bering Sea. A third species, *B. molle* Bean, has been reported from the Bering Sea, although records are scarce (Mecklenburg et al., 2002). During the course