



# Article

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## Validity and redescription of the flathead fish, *Onigocia macrocephala* (Weber, 1913) (Teleostei: Platycephalidae)

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### Abstract

After the original description, *Platycephalus macrocephalus* Weber, 1913 has been rarely treated as a valid species and its taxonomic status has been unclear. It was revealed here that seven syntypes of the species belong to two species and four of them are identical with *Onigocia grandisquama* (Regan, 1908) but the remaining three specimens are identified as a distinct species of *Onigocia* Jordan & Thompson, 1913, which has been mistakenly identified as *Onigocia macrolepis* (Bleeker, 1854) by several authors. One of the three specimens illustrated in the original description is designated as the lectotype of the species. *Onigocia macrocephala* is separable from its other congeners in having 21–23 (mode 22) pectoral fin rays, 9–10 caudal fin rays, 1 + 4–6 = 5–7 (mode 6) gill rakers, a larger head (38.8–42.3% SL), a single ocular flap present and usually extending slightly beyond the posterior margin of the orbit, a few or several small and short papillae on the posteromedial portion of the eye in larger specimens, the upper iris lappet short and branched, the lachrymal with two distinct antrorse spines anteriorly, a notch on the suborbital ridge below the eye, and no interopercular flap.

**Key words:** *Onigocia macrocephala*, Platycephalidae, validity, redescription, lectotype

### Introduction

In 1913, Weber originally described *Platycephalus macrocephalus* based on seven specimens collected from the Bali Sea, Sapeh Strait, north of Waigeo (Waigiou) and the southern Timor Sea. De Beaufort & Briggs (1962) described the species and recognized its validity, but did not provide comparison with other platycephalid species. According to the descriptions by Weber (1913) and de Beaufort & Briggs (1962), *P. macrocephalus* has 33–36 pored scales in the lateral line and a roughly serrated suborbital ridge. These characters agree well with those of the genus *Onigocia* Jordan & Thompson, 1913 (see Knapp, 1986; Imamura, 1966). After these descriptions, no authors have treated the species to be valid nor quoted the name, except for Knapp *et al.* (2000) who stated taxonomic status of the species to be unclear. In this study, I had an opportunity to examine the seven type specimens of *O. macrocephala*. Of them, ZMA 112437, including four specimens [38.3–40.7 mm standard length (SL)] from Sapeh Strait, is identified as *Onigocia grandisquama* (Regan, 1908). The other three specimens (ZMA 112436, 70.6 mm SL, from Bari Sea; ZMA 112438, 52.9 mm SL, from north of Waigeo; and ZMA 112439, 68.1 mm SL, from southern Timor Sea) are similar to *Onigocia macrolepis* (Bleeker, 1854) in having a distinct notch on the suborbital ridge below the eye, which has been recognized only in *O. macrolepis* in the genus (e.g., Knapp, 1999; Nakabo, 2002). However, it was revealed that the three specimens belong to a distinct species being separable from *O. macrolepis* in having characters such as a larger head. In addition, the larger two specimens have a character, presence of several small and short papillae on the posteromedial portion of the eye, which is not found in other members of the genus, including *O. macrolepis*. The purposes of this study are to redescribe *O. macrocephala* based on the three type specimens and an additional 32 specimens from the South China Sea (including China, Vietnam and the Philippines), Indonesia and Australia (Fig. 1), being mistakenly identified as *O. macrolepis* by several authors (e.g., Gloerfelt-Tarp & Kailola, 1984; Sainsbury *et al.*, 1984; Imamura *et al.*, 2006), and to show the validity of the species by comparison with eight congeners.