



# Article

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## ***Opistognathus pardus*, a new species of jawfish (Teleostei: Opistognathidae) from the Western Indian Ocean**

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### **Abstract**

A new species of jawfish, *Opistognathus pardus*, is described based on a single specimen, 98.8 mm SL, recently collected from the Western Indian Ocean off Quilon (Kerala), India. The combination of a rigid maxilla without flexible lamina posteriorly, a unique color pattern in which most of the head is covered with small, irregular-shaped, dark spots, dorsal-fin rays XI, 11, and the outermost segmented pelvic-fin ray tightly bound to adjacent ray, with the interradiation membrane not incised distally distinguishes the new species from other congeners. This is the fourth species of *Opistognathus* known from the coast of India or Sri Lanka. A range extension for *O. macrolepis* is also reported.

**Key words:** Jawfish, *Opistognathus*, new species, India

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to describe a new species of the jawfish genus *Opistognathus* Cuvier recently collected off Quilon (Kerala), India. The ten species of *Opistognathus* previously known from the western Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea, were newly described or reviewed by Smith-Vaniz (2009, 2010). A total of 39 Indo-West Pacific species of *Opistognathus* are currently recognized as valid (Eschmeyer, 2012), with at least 19 others yet to be described. In addition to the new species described herein, only four other species of *Opistognathus* are known from India or Sri Lanka: *Opistognathus nigromarginatus* Rüppell 1830, *O. rosenbergii* Bleeker 1856, *O. variabilis* Smith-Vaniz 2009, and *O. macrolepis* Peters 1866.

The Indian Ocean record of *Opistognathus macrolepis* is based on a color photograph examined by the first author of a 63 mm SL specimen (ZSI F-10576/2) collected off the Kalpakkam coast near Chennai (Tamilnadu). This jawfish was previously known only from the type locality (Bangkok), the Gulf of Thailand where described by Wongratana (1975) as *Opistognathus rex*, and the Gulf of Carpentaria where described by Whitley (1966) as *Merogymnoides carpentariae*. A full description of the Indian Ocean specimen is in preparation by Sudipta Biswas and others.

### **Materials and method**

Methods of counts and measurements follow Smith-Vaniz (2009, 2010). Infraorbital bones and the upper and lower jaws on the right side of the holotype were removed, cleared and stained and drawn with the aid of a camera lucid. Position of the fifth cranial nerve was determined by dissection prior to clearing and staining. Abbreviations for institutional depositories are Marine Biodiversity Museum at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi, India (CMFRI) and Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata (ZSI).