

Observations of the shortsnout lancetfish *Alepisaurus brevirostris* at sub-Antarctic Marion Island

Two published specimen records exist for the shortsnout lancetfish *Alepisaurus brevirostris* (Alepisauridae) from sub-Antarctic Marion Island (46°54'S, 37°45'E) in the Southern Ocean (Gon & Klages 1988, Gon & Heemstra 1990). The shortsnout lancetfish has been previously recorded at all the sub-Antarctic islands in the Indian sector of the Southern Ocean, where it is sometimes caught by giant petrels *Macronectes* spp. while swimming at the surface (Arnaud 1972). The first specimen record for Marion Island was of a mutilated specimen recovered from a giant petrel (Gon & Klages 1988). A third specimen and a sighting of the shortsnout lancetfish from Marion Island are reported.

The head of a predatory fish was found at Trypot Beach, Marion Island on 5 January 1993 by a member of the meteorological team and kept frozen on the island by NLA. Based on descriptions and illustrations given in Gon & Klages (1988) and Gon & Heemstra (1990), the head was identified as that of a shortsnout lancetfish. Head length (tip of snout to rear of operculum) was 132 mm, matching the 132,3 mm given for the first record (Gon & Klages 1988). The head was fresh and showed no signs of decomposition.

On 24 November 1993 JCPvW saw a fish, about one metre long, swimming slowly just below the sea surface close off Gunners Point at the meteorological base on Marion Island. He noticed the fish's long and large dorsal fin, elongated appearance and reddish brown back and subsequently identified his sighting as a shortsnout lancetfish on comparing it with the illustration and description in Gon & Heemstra (1990).

The shortsnout lancetfish is probably only occasionally taken by giant petrels, since it was not identified in a detailed study of the species' diet at Marion Island (Hunter & Brooke 1992). However, this may be partially due to giant petrels' apparent habit of consuming mainly the soft parts of the fish (Arnaud 1972, Gon & Klages 1988, Gon & Heemstra 1990) and the difficulty of identifying such material recovered from seabird stomachs.

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