ON THE OCCURRENCE OF FISHES OF THE FAMILY SCHINDLERIIDAE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

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The family Schindleriidae with the genus Schindleria was created by Giltay\(^1\) to accommodate Hemirhamphus præmaturus and H. pietschmanni described from the Pacific by Schindler\(^2\)-\(^3\) who presumed them to be sexually mature larval hemirhamphids.\(^4\) Bruun\(^5\) and Schultz\(^6\) have subsequently recorded the collection of S. præmaturus from the Pacific and the latter has placed the family Schindleriidae in a sub-order Schindleriina. According to Bruun\(^5\) Schindleria could be considered as the lightest of all known vertebrates whereas the gobies, Pardaka pygmaea and Misticthys luzonensis though shorter are comparatively heavier than the former. All the previous records of Schindleria have been from the Pacific, with S. præmaturus from widely separated areas, viz., Hawaiian Islands, New Guinea, Tahiti, Samoa, Tasman Sea off Sydney and Grafton (Australia) and Bikini, while S. pietschmanni has been known only from the Hawaiian Islands.

A study of the larval and juvenile fishes collected from the Laccadive Archipelago revealed the presence of specimens less than 20 mm. resembling larval fishes but with mature gonads which on further examination turned out to be Schindleria. Both the species are represented in the collections and there are in all 81 specimens of S. præmaturus ranging from 11.7-20.5 mm. in total length and 8 specimens of S. pietschmanni ranging from 8.2-15.1 mm. in total length. As in the Pacific, the former appears to be comparatively more abundant and widely distributed in the Laccadive area. This is the first record of their occurrence in the Indian Ocean Region and it is most likely that these should have a wider distribution than known hitherto but their small size might have prevented their detection from among larval fishes. It is hoped that the participants of the International Indian Ocean Expedition will be on the lookout for this interesting genus of fishes.

Detailed notes on the material studied by us are being published elsewhere.

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