

Muraenesocidae

by M.-L. Bauchot and L. Saldanha

Clofnam 79
Suppl.: 355

Very elongate fishes, snake-like body, scaleless. Snout often markedly elongate; anterior nostril tubular; posterior nostril a simple opening in front of eye; mouth large, the rictus behind the posterior edge of eye; no fleshy lips. Teeth prominent, even raptorial, especially those on vomer. Vertical fins and pectoral fins well developed; dorsal fin origin before or over pectoral base; pelvic fins absent.

Benthic on the continental shelf. Carnivorous. Transparent larval stage (leptocephalus) with metamorphosis.

Genera 9; in Clofnam area 2.

Recent revisions: Blache (1968—on a regional basis only), Castle & Williamson (1975—*Muraenesox* group only).

Note. Some authors include Muraenesocidae in the family Congridae.

KEY TO GENERA

- 1a Principal vomerine teeth large, compressed, sharply triangular in lateral view, with prominent basal cusps; principal teeth on lower jaw of the same form, erect or turned slightly inwards. *Muraenesox* (p. 560)
- 1b Principal vomerine teeth large, compressed, relatively blunt, especially in larger specimens, each with inconspicuous basal cusps; principal teeth on lower jaw relatively blunt *Cynoponticus* (p. 559)

CYNOPONTICUS Costa, 1846

Clofnam 79.1

Vomerine teeth of median row triangular in lateral view, compressed, with more or less inconspicuous basal cusps (large vomerine teeth typically truncated in large specimens); teeth on the dentary essentially in 3 or 4 rows with the principal row consisting of truncated and erect teeth.

See species for other characteristics, biology, etc.

Species 3; in Clofnam area 1.

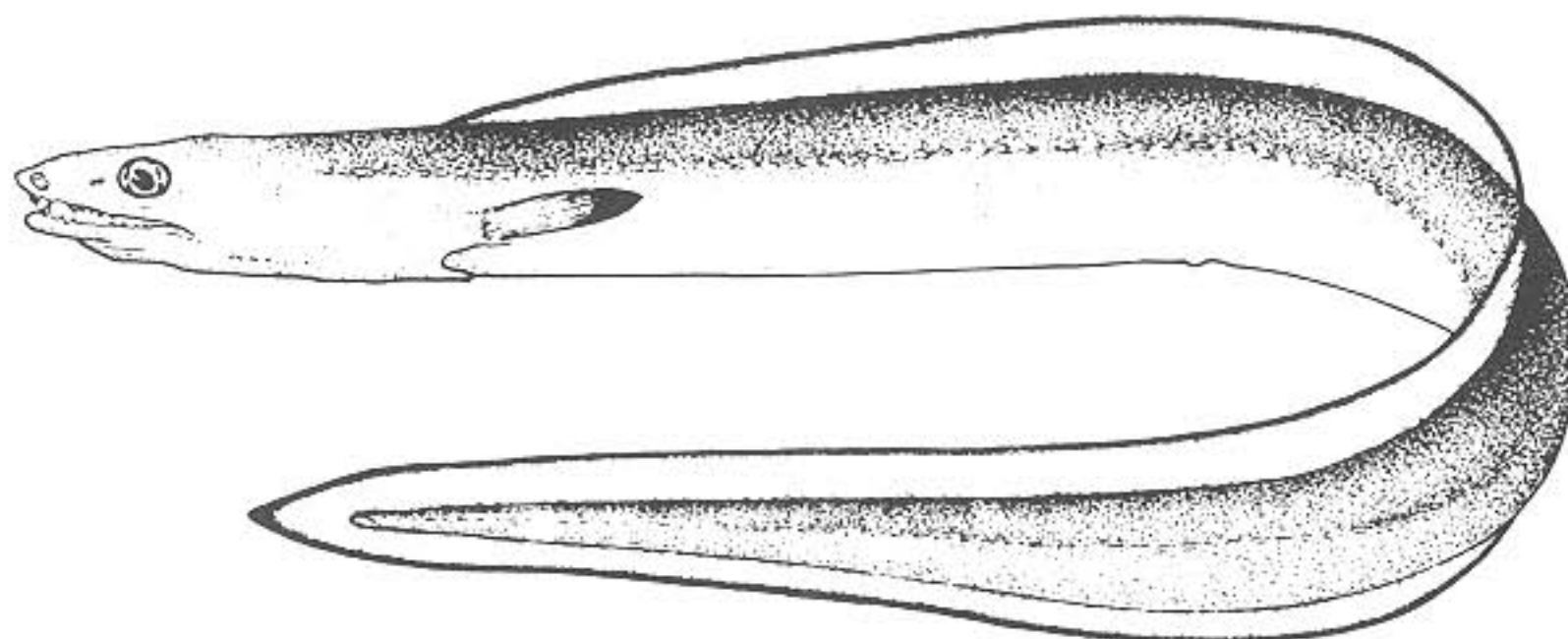
Recent revisions: Blache (1968—on a regional basis only), Blache & Tortonese (1968), Castle & Williamson (1975).

Cynoponticus ferox Costa, 1846

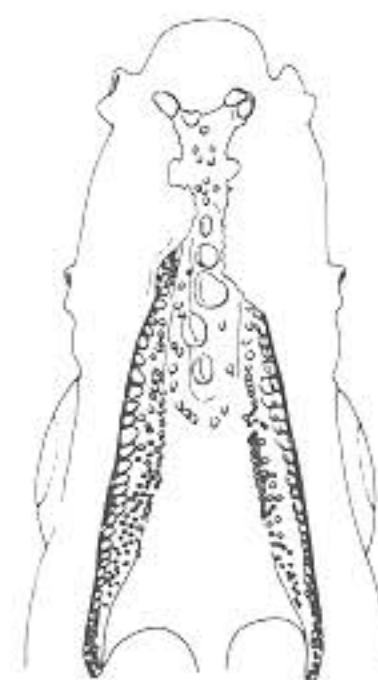
Clofnam 79.1.1

Common synonyms: none.

Common name: Fierce conger (En).



Tooth from vomer



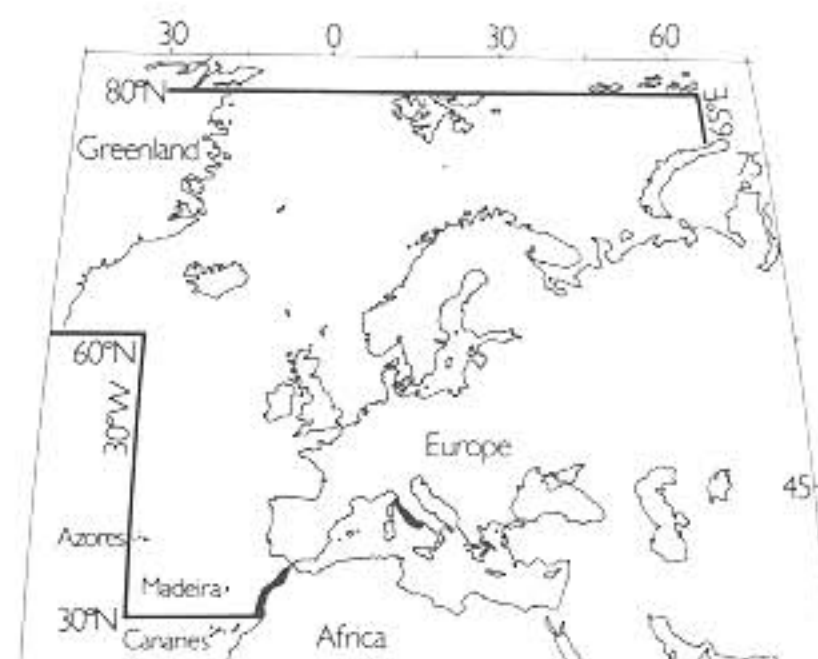
Teeth of upper jaw

Diagnosis: body elongate, scaleless, compressed posteriorly; prominent conical snout; eye large, oval. Anterior nostril tubular in a depression of upper jaw, near the tip of snout; posterior nostril a collared pore before eye. Mouth large, rictus well behind level of posterior edge of eye. In both jaws, a middle row of incisiform teeth and several rows of minute caniniform teeth, bigger anteriorly; on the vomer a median line of strongly compressed and blunt teeth, triangular in lateral view, with more or less inconspicuous basal cusps, and minute caniniform teeth at each side. Tongue largely adnate. Gill openings large, latero-ventral, isthmus narrow. Vertical fins continuous with caudal fin; dorsal fin origin slightly before pectoral fin base; pectoral fin about 2.0–2.6 in head. Lateral line a series of palmate and digitate organs, a minute pore at the end of each digitation (their complexity increasing with age): 36–40 before anus, 9–10 before pectoral fins; no supra-temporal pore. Vertebrae 140–147. **Colour:** brown, paler ventrally, median fins with a narrow black margin. **Size:** to 150 cm.

Habitat: benthic on the shelf on sand and muddy bottoms at 10–100 m.

Food: carnivorous. **Reproduction:** leptocephalus unknown.

Distribution: eastern Atlantic northward to Gibraltar, also western Mediterranean (Elba, Ischia, Portoferraio). Elsewhere, southward to Angola.

**MURAENESOX** McClelland, 1843

[Clofnam 79.2]

Vomerine teeth of median row large, compressed, moderately acute, each with sharp anterior and posterior edges and prominent basal cusps; principal teeth on the dentary of the same form, erect or turned slightly inwards.

See species for other characteristics, biology, etc.

Species 2; in Clofnam area 1.

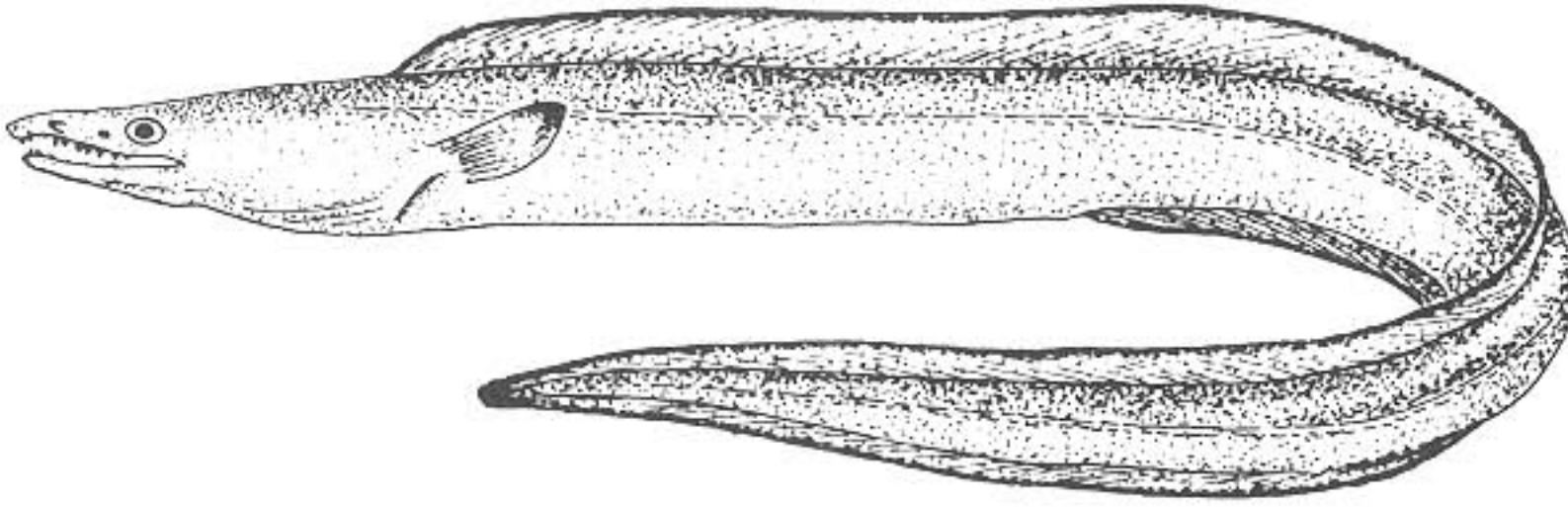
Recent revision: Castle & Williamson (1975).

Muraenesox cinereus (Forsskal, 1775)

[Clofnam 79.2.1]

Common synonyms: none.

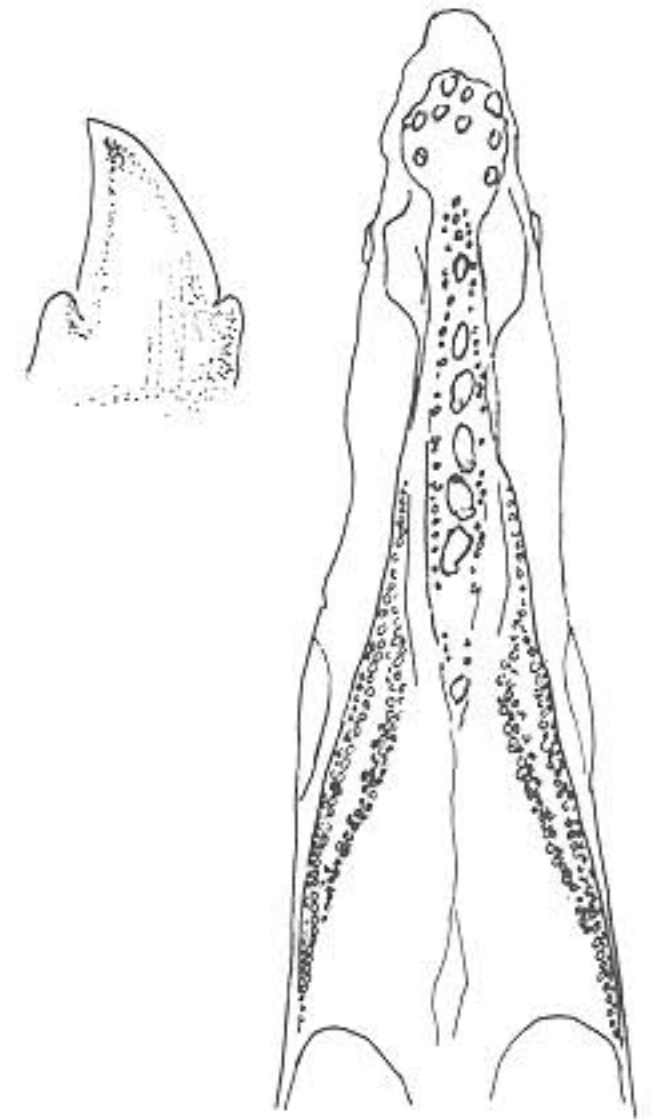
Common name: Daggertooth pike-conger (En).



Diagnosis: body elongate, scaleless, compressed posteriorly; prominent conical snout; eye large, inter-orbital space about 8.2 in head; anterior nostril tubular, posterior nostril a simple opening nearer to eye than to anterior nostril; mouth large, rictus well behind eye. In lower jaw a middle row of prominent, sharp, tricuspid, erect teeth; median vomerine teeth sharply triangular in lateral view, compressed, with anterior and posterior basal cusps and the bases often in contact. Gill openings large, latero-ventral. Vertical fins continuous with caudal fin; dorsal fin origin over pectoral fin base or slightly before; dorsal finrays before a vertical through anus 66–78. Lateral line pores before anus 40–47. Vertebrae 145–159. **Colour:** head and body dark to grey/black, ventral side lighter; margin of dorsal and anal fins and tip of pectoral fins black. **Size:** to about 200 cm.

Habitat: over soft bottoms down to about 100 m, also in estuaries, in warm seas. **Food:** carnivorous (bottom-living fishes and decapods). **Reproduction:** spawning in August–September in Japan.

Distribution: a record in the vicinity of Tel Aviv–Jaffa (coast of Israel) (Golani & Ben-Tuvia, 1982). A recent immigrant from the Red Sea. Elsewhere, known from the Red Sea and throughout the northern Indian Ocean to Indonesia and northwards to Japan.



Teeth of upper jaw

