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# First Record of the Pipefish *Acentronura* (*Amphelikturus*) *dendritica* (Syngnathidae) from the Caribbean

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**FIRST RECORD OF THE PIPEFISH**  
***Acentronura* (*Amphelikurus*) *dendritica***  
**(SYNGNATHIDAE)**  
**FROM THE CARIBBEAN**

The pipehorse, *Acentronura dendritica*, has previously been known only from western Atlantic waters outside the Caribbean: Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States, Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas, Hispaniola (Atlantic coast) and Brasil (Dawson, 1982a). Dawson (1982b) reported the presence of a pelagic specimen of the subgenus *Amphelikurus* off Sierra Leona (eastern Atlantic), but he could not determine specific identity with certainty. In 1986 a specimen of pipehorse from Santa Marta (Colombia) was brought to our attention, constituting the first report of the species from Caribbean waters; here we describe it. The methods for counting and measuring follow Dawson (1982a); measurements are given as percentages of standard length.

*Acentronura* (*Amphelikurus*) *dendritica* (Barbour) 1905

*Amphelikurus dendriticus*: Böhlke and Chaplin (1968): 181; Dawson (1982a): 11-13.

*Acentronura dendritica*: Robins *et al.* (1986): 125.

**MATERIAL EXAMINED**

INVEMAR-P 1353, H.G. Müller, El Morro (Santa Marta), 19 March 1986.

**COUNTS AND MEASUREMENTS**

Dorsal fin: 17; pectoral fin: 15; rings: 13 + 40; subdorsal rings: 0 + 4; total length: 31 mm; standard length: 30 mm; head length: 16.7%; snout length: 5.7%; snout depth: 2.7%; depth at anal ring: 5.0%; trunk depth: 5.7%; length of dorsal-fin base: 7.7%; length of pectoral-fin: 4.3%; length of pectoral-fin base: 2.7%; predorsal-fin length: 44.0%; eye diameter: 4.3%.

**REMARKS**

The specimen was collected at 30 m depth at El Morro (11° 15'N; 74° 14'W), a rocky islet in front of Bahía de Santa Marta, in rocky and coral rubble. Elsewhere the species has been taken in both planktonic and benthic collections; benthic specimens have come from depths of 25 m or less (usually less than 15 m). Nothing was previously known about the food habits of the pipehorse; probably due to handling, abundant remains of microcrustaceans were expelled through the anus of our specimen. The Colombian fish is a male whose brood pouch is below 9½ tail

**Table 1.** Comparison between body proportions of the Colombian male specimen (INVEMAR-P 1353), the female holotype from Bermuda (Dawson, 1982a) and the only specimen known from the eastern Atlantic, sex unknown (Dawson, 1982b), of pipehorses.

Character	Bermuda	Colombia	Sierra Leona
Standard length	72.5 mm	30.0 mm	35.0 mm
Standard length / Head length	7.2	6.0	6.8
Head length / Snout length	3.1	2.9	2.1
Snout length / Snout depth	3.0	2.1	4.8
Head length / Length of dorsal-fin base	2.1	2.2	2.2
Head length / Depth at anal ring	2.7	3.3	6.4
Head length / Trunk depth	1.9	2.9	3.6
Head length / Length of pectoral-fin	4.4	3.8	5.1
Pectoral-fin length / Length of pectoral-fin base	1.2	1.6	1.7

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rings; it has a long dermal flap on nape, which extends forward beyond snout tip. After one day in ethanol, the fish was reddish, with irregular white and brown blotches and spots; brown was mainly concentrated in the ventral region, between snout and vent; the dorsal and pectoral fins were colorless; the brood pouch was pale, with the closure yellow. The dorsal fin of our specimen originates near the middle of the first tail ring; the dorsal fin of the western Atlantic population originates between the anterior margin of the last trunk ring and the anterior fourth of the first tail ring; that of the only specimen known from the eastern Atlantic originates near the middle of the second tail ring. Therefore, the Colombian individual seems to be intermediate between the latter two conditions. A comparison between proportional data from the holotype and the Colombian and eastern Atlantic specimens is made in Table 1. As can be seen, there is wide variability in measurements, probably related to differences in sex, size and habit of these specimens. The main difference between the African specimen and the western Atlantic population is the number of tail rings (43 vs. 37-41). However, we agree with Dawson (1982b) that examination of additional eastern Atlantic material is needed before naming new species.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

H.G. Müller donated the specimen to the fish collection of the Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas de Punta de Betín (INVEMAR-P). S. Zea corrected the English text.

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