

First record of Keeltail pomfret *Taractes rubescens* (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) in Palawan, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Palawan is widely recognized for its shallow-water fish biodiversity, however, the diversity of deep-sea species that inhabit its offshore waters remains poorly documented. This paper documents the first recorded presence of the Keeltail pomfret *Taractes rubescens* (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) in Palawan. One specimen displayed for sale was purchased on 27 April 2024 at the Puerto Princesa City New Market. According to the fish vendor, the fish was caught off the city's eastern coastline. It weighed around 3.0 kg and measured 610 mm in total length. Other measurements included a standard length of 475 mm, a fork length of 530 mm, and a body depth of 175 mm. Additional key measurements included a 290 mm distance from snout to anal fin, a 145 mm head length, and a 175 mm pectoral fin length. Meristic features recorded include 29 dorsal fin rays, 20 anal fin rays, 42 lateral line scales, and a gill raker count of 4 + 12 gill rakers (upper limb + lower limb) on the left arch compared 3 + 14 gill rakers on the right arch. This new record adds to the growing list of deep-sea species found in the region and highlights the valuable role of local fish markets in uncovering and documenting marine biodiversity, particularly for species from less-explored deep-sea habitats.

Keywords: aquatic biodiversity, Bramidae, deep sea fish, ichthyofauna, morpho-meristic analysis

Palawan is globally known for its rich fish biodiversity, particularly within shallow waters and reef ecosystems (Balisco et al. 2023). However, deep-sea fish species in its offshore waters are poorly documented. Here, the first recorded presence of the Keeltail pomfret *Taractes rubescens* is reported (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) in Palawan, highlighting its significance as part of the region's deep-sea biodiversity. One specimen displayed for sale was purchased from a fish vendor on 27 April 2024, at the Puerto Princesa City New Market

(9°46'59"N, 118°44'41"E), Palawan (Figure 1), who indicated that the fish was caught off the eastern coastline of the city, specifically in the West Sulu Sea. Morphometric and meristic analyses were conducted to document the species' key features, following Lee et al. (2019).

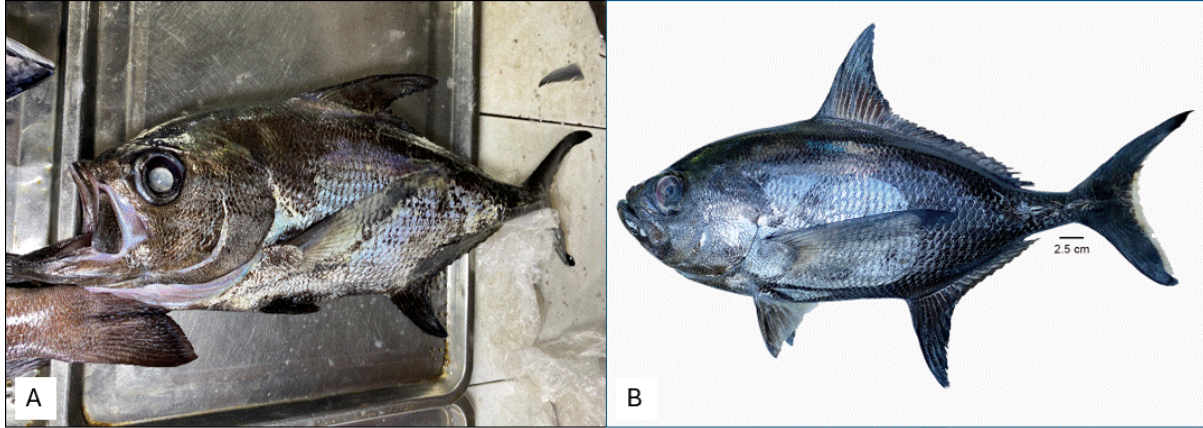


Figure 1. Photo of the Keeltail pomfret *Taractes rubescens* (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) displayed for sale at Puerto Princesa City Public Market (A); and polished photo of the same species (B).

Meristic counts and morphometric measurements (Table 1) were taken. The specimen measured 610 mm in total length, which is slightly shorter than the reported maximum length of 890 mm, but twice the size of the commonly reported length of 300 mm (Froese and Pauly 2025). The specimen had 4 + 12 gill rakers on the left side (Figure 2A) and 3 + 14 on the right side (Figure 2B), including the rudimentary rakers, which aligns closely to the report of Koeda and Ho (2020). This also represents the second Philippine record of the species, following its first documentation from Panay Island (Hata et al. 2016; Motomura et al. 2017). This finding constitutes the second pomfret species recorded from Palawan; the first being Sickie Pomfret *Taractichthys steindachneri* (Döderlein, 1883) which was previously documented from the same fish market in Puerto Princesa City (Dolorosa et al. 2025). However, *T. rubescens* appears to be uncommon in local fish markets and social media reports compared to *T. steindachneri*. Ichthyofaunal surveys of local markets are essential to further expand the biodiversity records of the province (Huang and Balisco 2025).

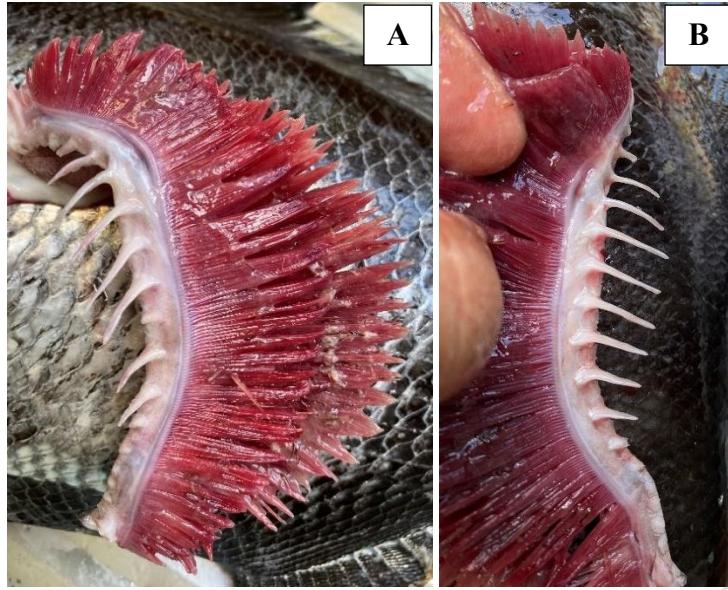


Figure 2. The gills rakers of Keeltail pomfret *Taractes rubescens* (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) purchased at Puerto Princesa City Public Market. (A. Left gill arch (4 (Upper limb) + 12 (Lower limb) gill rakers, B. Right Gill arch (3 (Upper limb) + 14 (Lower limb) gill rakers).

Table 1. Comparison of morphological characters of *Taractes rubescens* (Jordan & Evermann, 1887) from different regions.

Morphological character	Present study	Hata et al. (2016) (Panay Island, Philippines)	Jordan & Evermann (1887) (Gulf of Mexico) (holotype)	Mead (1972) (Gulf of Mexico and West Pacific)	Yoshida (1973) (Hawaii)	Roul et al. (2018) (Arabian Sea)	Lee et al. (2019) (Korea)
Number of specimens used	1		1	2	2	4	2
Standard length (SL, mm)	475	389.8	96	620–690	660–663	701–722	302–448
Meristic counts							
Dorsal fin rays	29	31	30	30–32	30	28–30	30
Anal fin rays	20	21	21	21–23	20	20–21	21–22
Pectoral fin rays	18	19	20	19–22	20–21	20–21	19–20
Lateral-line scales	42	13–16	-	41	45–47	45–46	42–43
Gill rakers	16–17	11	13	9–12	10	10	9–10
In % SL							
Pectoral length	36.8	33.2	-	-	42.7–43.4	36.9–37.0	-
Pelvic length	-	35.1	-	-	15.2	12.3–12.5	-
Snout to dorsal fin	35.8	41.0	41.8	38.8–41.6	38.6–39.5	37.1–37.5	38.9–41.5
Snout to pectoral fin	30.5	33.2	36.7	31.4–34.1	31.7–32.6	31.1–31.9	30.6–31.7

Snout to pelvic fin	33.7	35.1	37.8	35.2–39.1	-	30.0–30.7	32.9–34.6
Snout to anal fin	61.1	62.9	66.9	61.3–63	60.5–62.7	60.4–61.1	58.0–62.1
Length of dorsal fin base	45.3	48.1	45.5	44.6–47.8	-	-	46.8–47.4
Head length	30.5	33.1	17.8	30.2–30.8	31.8–32.3	32.9–33.2	29.4–31.2
Eye diameter, horizontal	6.3	7.1	12.3	5.5–6.8	6.4–6.6	5.9–6.1	5.5–6.9
Upper caudal fin length	37.9	33.7	-	31.2	-	-	22.3–29.3
Lower caudal fin length	29.5	30.2	-	26.1	-	-	21.8–24.1

Like other pomfret species, *T. rubescens* is a highly migratory, circumglobal species widely distributed in the tropical and subtropical waters (Masuda et al. 1984; Fricke et al. 2025). It is a marine, benthopelagic species occurring at depths of up to 600 m. Although this represents only the second confirmed record of the species in the Philippines, *T. rubescens* may also occur in other parts of the country, considering that eight pomfret species are currently recorded from Philippines and there is an emerging small-scale fishery for pomfrets nationwide (Dolorosa et al. 2025). Securing of specimen for museum display is suggested.

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GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT

The authors declare that this manuscript was prepared without the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools at any stage of the research or writing process.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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