

California Academy of Sciences

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**ANNOTATED CHECKLISTS OF FISHES**

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**Family Zaproridae Jordan & Evermann 1898**

prowfishes

By

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The prowfish, *Zaprora silenus*, is often found in association with jellyfishes. Juveniles take shelter under the medusae and are often mistaken for medusafish, *Ichthyos lockingtoni* (Centrolophidae). Body and head stout and compressed; snout blunt; mouth terminal and large. Dorsal and anal fins high and evenly contoured. Dorsal fin composed of 54–58 thin, flexible spines. Anal fin with 3 or 4 thin spines and 24–30 soft rays. Caudal fin large and rounded, peduncle short and deep. Pectoral fins large, with 20–25 rays. Pelvic fins and girdle absent. Soft rays of anal, caudal, and pectoral fins branched two, three, or more times. One pair of nostrils (posterior pair absent). Scales small, cycloid, present on body and median fins. Pores of cephalic lateral line canals large and numerous: suborbital 8, preopercular 7, mandibular 4. Trunk lateral line canal absent, up to three incomplete lines of widely spaced superficial neuromasts discernible in fresh specimens. Sharp, uniserial teeth on jaws; vomerine and palatine teeth absent. Gill membranes broadly united and free from isthmus. Branchiostegal rays 6. Pyloric caeca numerous (36–77). Swim bladder absent. Vertebrae 61–64. Adults grayish blue to green with white-, yellow-, or pale-blue-rimmed head pores; young fish orange-brown with inconspicuous head pores. Total length 1 m (3.3 ft) or more. North Pacific Ocean; adults near bottom to depth of 675 m or more, juveniles and young adults often taken near surface over deep water. One species.

The diet of *Zaprora* has long been known to include jellyfishes, but the degree of dependence on this food item has been questioned. A recent analysis (Tokranov 1999 [ref. 26853]) of the stomach contents of 102 adult prowfish from the Pacific Ocean off the northern Kuril Islands and southeastern Kamchatka, Russia, showed jellyfishes to be the primary food item. The stomachs contained 60–62% Scyphozoa (jellyfishes) and 6–15% Ctenophora (comb jellies), with smaller amounts of euphausiids, hyperiid amphipods, and other fishes. The jellyfish fragments gave support to a previous suggestion that *Zaprora* uses its large, terminal mouth and sharp, uniserial teeth to bite off the edges of the medusae.

Jordan and Evermann (1898:2849 [ref. 2445]) made *Zaprora* the type of a new family, Zaproridae. The phylogenetic position of this family in relation to other perciform fishes has been problematic. McAllister and Kresja (1961 [ref. 26624]), after reviewing the taxonomic history and osteological and soft anatomy characteristics, classified the Zaproridae with Makushok's (1958 [ref. 2878]) "northern blennioids" in a superfamily "Stichaeoidea" and suggested they are most closely related to the Stichaeidae. Following McAllister and Kresja (1961), Nelson (1984 [ref. 13596], 1994 [ref. 26204]) classified the Zaproridae in the suborder Zoarcoidei, an expanded group of northern blennylike fishes. Anderson (1984 [ref. 26846]) found that, among zoarcoid families, Zaproridae shared one synapomorphy, the presence of spines in the anterior end of the anal fin, with Anarhichadidae, Stichaeidae, Pholidae, and Scytalinidae. However, no further work to elucidate the relationships of *Zaprora* within the suborder Zoarcoidei has been reported.

**Genus *Zaprora* Jordan 1896**

*Zaprora* Jordan 1896:202 [ref. 2395]. Type species *Zaprora silenus* Jordan 1896. Type by original designation (also monotypic).

***Zaprora silenus* Jordan 1896**

*Zaprora silenus* Jordan 1896:203, Pl. 20 [ref. 2395] (Nanaimo, Vancouver I., British Columbia, Canada). Holotype (unique): NMC 76-0443 [ex BCPM 895-4-1].

DISTRIBUTION: North Pacific: Bering Sea to southern California and to Okhotsk Sea and northern Japan.

REMARKS: The holotype consists of the whole fish, measuring 737 mm in total length. The catalog number using the new National Museums of Canada (now Canadian Museum of Nature) fish collection acronym and numbering system is CMNFI 1976-0443.1. The old acronym is given above for consistency with Eschmeyer's (1998 [ref. 23416]) *Catalog of Fishes* database.

**Summary Lists**

**Genus-Group Names of Family Zaproridae**

*Zaprora* Jordan 1896 = *Zaprora* Jordan 1896

**Incertae Sedis Genus-Group Names**

None

**Unavailable Genus-Group Names**

None

**Species-Group Names of Family Zaproridae**

*silenus*, *Zaprora* Jordan 1896 = *Zaprora silenus* Jordan 1896

**Incertae Sedis Species-Group Names**

None

**Unavailable Species-Group Names**

None

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