

## The Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*, New to the Fish Fauna of the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia and Canada

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A specimen of the Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis* was caught at Sloughenwhite Ledge, St. Margarets Bay, Halifax County, Nova Scotia (44°37'N, 64°03'W) in August 1983. This specimen is the first record of the species and of the family Lobotidae for Nova Scotia and for Canada. It extends the known range northwards over 500 km. No significant differences were found between the specimen and published descriptions.

Key Words: Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*, new record, Nova Scotia.

A Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*, was caught in a mackerel trap at Sloughenwhite Ledge, St. Margarets Bay, Halifax County, Nova Scotia (44°37'N, 64°03'W) by Donald Harnish in August 1983. This specimen provides the first known record of this species and the family Lobotidae for Nova Scotia and Canada, and extends the known range over 500 km north from Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

We document this range extension here and provide a detailed description and additional information in the format of *Fishes of the Atlantic coast of Canada* by Leim and Scott (1966). Supplementary information was drawn from Böhlke and Chaplin (1968) and Hardy (1978). The French vernacular was obtained from Smith (1981).

### Family LOBOTIDAE

### Tripletails

This family is comprised of the Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*, found world-wide in warm waters, and one other genus, *Datnioides*, with several species in brackish and fresh waters of the East Indies. These fishes resemble the Serranidae (Basses: see Leim and Scott 1966: 234–242) but lack vomerine and palatine teeth, and a subocular shelf, typical of that family. The name Tripletail comes from the posterior position of the dorsal and anal fins which give the impression of a three-lobed tail.

### Tripletail

### Croupia roche

*Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790)

**DESCRIPTION:** Body short and deep, its maximum depth 2.5 times in total length (TL), 2.1 times in standard length (SL), compressed, caudal peduncle deep, 6.3 times in SL. Head profile concave, length entering 3.5 times in TL, 2.8 in SL; two flat spines on operculum; both arms of preoperculum serrate with backward projecting lobe at angle; mouth superior, short,

ending below mid-pupil; upper jaw 2.9 in HL, lower jaw protruding before upper; small rows of conical teeth on jaws; vomer and palatines toothless. Orbit entering 7.9 times in HL. Fins: dorsal (I), XII, 15, strong dorsal spines increasing in height to the 5th which enters 2.6 times in HL, then decreases to soft dorsal fin rays which in turn increase to maximum height in posterior third then rapidly diminish forming a point; caudal rounded; anal III, 11, spines strong, third the longest, entering 4 times in HL, soft rays forming a rounded point; pectorals rounded, length 2.1 in HL; pelvics pointed, longer than pectorals, 1.5 times in HL. Lateral line distinct with 47 scales, following curvature of dorsal profile then descending to mid-lateral position on caudal peduncle. Gill rakers moderately long, 2/3 of orbit diameter, 6+14=20 (5+14=19 on right side). Large scales, weakly ctenoid, covering body, opercular bones, cheek, and top of head forwards almost to the nostrils. Vertebral centra 24, with 11 abdominal and 13 caudal centra including the urostylar centrum. (Description based on Canadian specimen).

**COLOR:** In our preserved specimen, body and fins, (except for the almost transparent pectoral fins), dark chocolate brown, with the centers of the scales darker, and the lighter belly. Distal edge of the caudal fin without pigment. When fresh, the scales were mottled dark purplish-brown and bluish-green, slightly darker above and with the posterior margin of caudal fin white. Other specimens have been reported to be pale brown, greenish, and cream yellow. Juveniles have spots at the bases of the soft dorsal and anal fins.

**DISTINCTIONS:** The dished-out forehead, deep body, single spinous and soft-rayed dorsal fin of the Tripletail resemble the Spotfin Butterflyfish [*Chaetodon ocellatus*, see Leim and Scott 1968: 265–267] but is unlikely to be confused with any other fish of the region. The Tripletail differs from the Spotfin Butter-



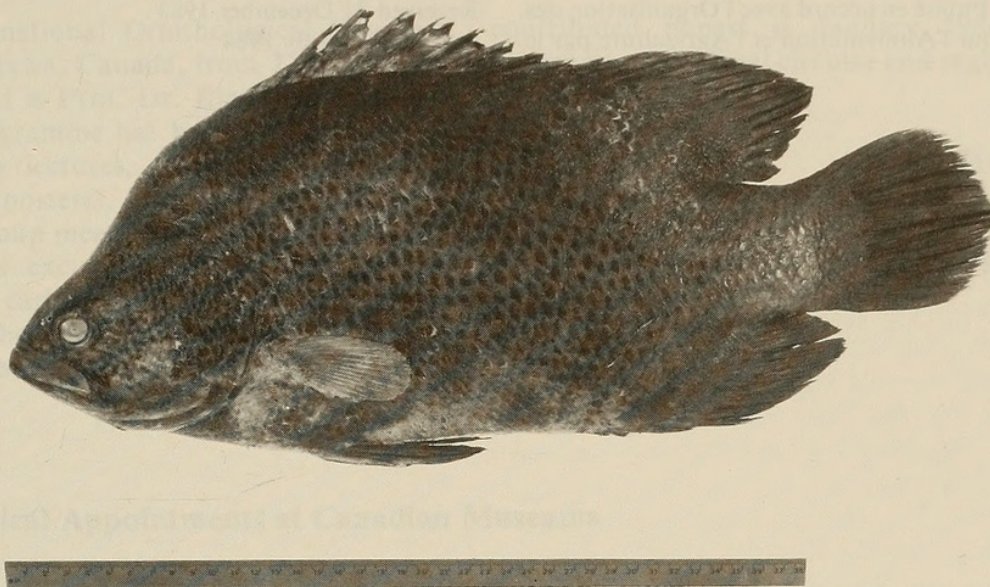


FIGURE 1. Photograph of 366 mm SL specimen of Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*, caught at Sloughenwhite Ledge, St. Margarets Bay, Halifax County, Nova Scotia.

flyfish in the lack of a dark band through the eye and the head, the pelvic fins not reaching the anal fin, and the soft dorsal rays forming a point instead of a rounded curve.

**SIZE:** Attains a length of 1016 mm (Böhlke and Chaplin 1968), common to 500 mm (Smith 1981). Our specimen was 450 mm in TL, 366 mm in SL, and weighed 1.92 kg.

**RANGE:** Recorded from warm seas around the world. In the western Atlantic, known from Argentina to Bermuda, and was previously known north to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. In the eastern Atlantic, occurs on the west coast of Africa, the Mediterranean, and St. Helena; in the Indo-Pacific from Iran and Korea to southern Australia; in the eastern Pacific from Panama and Mexico where it was known as *Lobotes pacificus* Gilbert.

**Canadian distribution:** Known only from Sloughenwhite Ledge, St. Margarets Bay, Halifax County, Nova Scotia (44°37'N, 64°03'W), where it was caught by Donald Harnish in August 1983 (National Museum of Natural Sciences catalogue number NMC83-0746).

**BIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS:** Spawns from July to August in the United States. Mature eggs probably exceed 1 mm in diameter. Very small specimens dwell inshore amongst algae in brackish water. Juveniles up

to 330 mm float at the surface, often under clumps of floating sargassum weed, but sometimes on their sides mimicking mangrove leaves. Young float great distances in sargassum weed and have been seen in schools some distance offshore, apparently migrating. Adults live in coastal areas around man-made structures, in bays, harbours, passes, rivers, and at mouths of small freshwater streams, over bottoms of sand, rock or coral. Often lie on sides at the surface. Usually between 1–40 m depth, and usually inshore of 275 km. In South Carolina they move inshore in spring through fall.

#### Acknowledgments

Donald Harnish captured this specimen and drew it to our attention. Judy L. Camus took the radiograph used for vertebral counts. We would like to thank both these persons for their valuable assistance.

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