

Trachinocephalus myops (Snakefish)

Family: Synodontidae (Lizardfish)

Order: Aulopiformes (Lizardfish and Grinners)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Snakefish, *Trachinocephalus myops*.

[<http://www.fishwisepro.com/Pictures/details?Zoom=True&SID=47037&PictureId=11>, downloaded 7 March 2017]

TRAITS. *Trachinocephalus myops*, also known as the snakefish, is greyish brown in colour, with four yellow stripes on each side of its body (Fig. 1). These stripes extend the length of the fish and are present throughout life. Along the lateral line are several dark spots, visible during the post-larval phase. They are slender fish, elongated in shape, with eyes at the front of the head, a blunt short snout, and the mouth is oblique. The lower jaw extends beyond the upper jaw, and their teeth are in a row and are pointed and compressed. The anal fin is long. The average length of this fish is 25cm but it can grow up to 40cm. The snakefish does not exhibit sexual dimorphism, meaning that the males and females look similar.

DISTRIBUTION. Worldwide distribution in tropical and temperate waters (Fig. 2), including the Atlantic, Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. The snakefish or a very close relative occurs in the Indian Ocean.

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. The snakefish is a bottom dweller that sometimes burrows and therefore favours areas where the sea floor is sandy (Fig. 3). It lives in shallow waters usually less than 400m in depth, where there are soft bottoms. They also live in reef bottoms. This fish burrows into the sandy sea floor and awaits unsuspecting smaller fish that may pass nearby (Fig. 4).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The snakefish is a carnivore that feeds on small fish that live in similar habitat. It burrows into the sandy sea floor and awaits unsuspecting fish that may pass nearby.

POPULATION ECOLOGY. The snakefish has been observed by itself or sometimes in pairs. It is known that the snakefish reaches maturity after two years but the lifespan is not known.

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The snakefish has not been harvested for sale. They are sometimes caught when nets are cast deep but they are regarded as trash fish. They are not hunted and not known to be endangered. According to the IUCN Red List *Trachinocephalus myops* is of Least Concern.

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. Red regions show the occurrence of *Trachinocephalus myops*.

[http://www.fishbase.org/images/aquamaps/native/pic_Fis-15202.jpg, downloaded 7 March 2017]



Fig. 3. Buried *Trachinocephalus myops* awaiting prey.

[<http://www.diverosa.com/Lembah%202006/IL2-087%20Snakefish,%20Trachinocephalus%20myops%20.html>, downloaded 7 March 2017]



Fig. 4. *Trachinocephalus myops* feeding.

[<http://www.francescoricciardi.com/snakefish-eating-lembah-strait-north-sulawesi-indonesia/>, downloaded 7 March 2017]