

**On the Status of the Australian Serranid Fishes
Epinephelus ergastularius Whitley
and *E. thompsoni* Whitley**

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ABSTRACT. The grouper *Epinephelus ergastularius* Whitley, 1930, from New South Wales and Queensland is recognised as a valid species; it is closely related to the wide-ranging Indo-Pacific *E. octofasciatus* Griffin and the Japanese *E. septemfasciatus* (Thunberg), sharing with them such characters as one or a few small spines on the ventral margin of the preopercle, seven dark bars on the body of the young, the upper half of the peduncular bar black, and the same meristic data, including nine anal soft rays. It differs in having a truncate to slightly emarginate caudal fin in the adult with a distinct broad pale posterior border, pale borders posteriorly on the dorsal and anal fins of adults, and irregular, fine dermal ridges on the back adjacent to the dorsal-fin base. The young can be distinguished by the unequal spacing between the first four dark bars on the body. *Epinephelus chabaudi* (Castelnau) of East Africa is also a close relative, differing in having numerous branched pyloric caeca, a prominent black streak above the maxilla in the adult, and in lacking dermal ridges and broad pale borders on the fins. *Epinephelus thompsoni* Whitley, 1948, is known from a single specimen, taken in 129 to 137 m off Queensland, which has only 13 dorsal soft rays. This grouper name is a junior secondary homonym of *E. thompsoni* (Fowler, 1923). The name, *E. perplexus*, replaced the homonym.

RANDALL, J.E., D.F. HOESE & P. LAST, 1993. On the status of the Australian serranid fishes *Epinephelus ergastularius* Whitley and *E. thompsoni* Whitley. Records of the Australian Museum 45(1): 25-31.

Whitley (1930) described a new species of grouper, *Epinephelus ergastularius*, from a specimen 180 mm in standard length taken in about 15 m near Sydney, New

South Wales, in 1925. He gave localities in New South Wales for other specimens in the Australian Museum but did not provide their lengths, registration numbers, or