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A New Species of *Eugnathogobius* (Gobiidae) from Peninsular Malaysia †

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Abstract

The new estuarine goby *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. is described from 5 specimens (4 males: 27.0–31.5 mm standard length; 1 female: 27.5 mm standard length) collected from a small ditch in the lower reach of the Terengganu River basin, east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The new species is easily distinguished from other congeners, except *E. kabilia*, by the following a combination of characteristics: 16 segmented caudal-fin rays; 30 or 31 longitudinal scale lows; high first dorsal fin (especially in males); no head pores; shoulder with oblique black band; transverse black markings on each scale; paired black blotches on caudal-fin base; and distinct black dots on upper caudal fin. Although *E. kabilia* is very similar to the new species, the latter has a shorter jaw in males (well-extended in the former), high first dorsal fin (low), first dorsal-fin second spine length > 16.8% of standard length (<13.6%), throat yellowish in the fresh condition (whitish), and a yellowish second dorsal fin (reddish in males of *E. kabilia*). Because the type locality of the new species is clearly not a natural environmental feature and no salinity during the low tide, despite being included in the tidal area, the true habitat is suggested as being the upper reaches of estuarine areas.

Keywords: taxonomy; morphology; *Calamiana*; South China Sea

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1. Introduction

An ichthyofaunal survey conducted in Terengganu, east side of Peninsular Malaysia, from 12 to 18 July 2025, resulted in the collection of an unfamiliar goby in a ditch adjacent to the survey party's accommodations in the Terengganu River basin. Morphological features of the goby indicated that it belongs to the genus *Eugnathogobius* Smith, 1931, being similar to *Eugnathogobius kabilia* (Herre, 1940). Although the generic limits of the genus are confused (see below), no valid species of *Eugnathogobius* or related genera matched the collected specimen, which is therefore described here as new to science.

2. Materials and Methods

All specimens were collected using a hand net at night during low tide. Counts and measurements followed Larson (2009) [1], except for the following: longitudinal scales counted from just above upper end of pectoral-fin base to midpoint of caudal-fin base; transverse scales counted from anal-fin origin to first dorsal-fin base (TRF) and second dorsal-fin base (TRB-1), and second dorsal-fin origin to anal-fin base (TRB-2); predorsal scales included all scales on dorsal midline of head to first dorsal-fin origin, prepelvic scales included all scales on ventral midline of head to midpoint of pelvic-fin spines; head depth and width measured at posterior margin of preopercle; body depth measured at pelvic-fin origin and anal-fin origin; distance between dorsal-fins measured between first and second dorsal-fin origins (D1–D2); number of anal-fin pterygiophores inserting before first haemal spine (AP). Measurements (to 0.1 mm) of preserved specimens were made under a stereo microscope with digital calipers. Standard length is abbreviated as SL. Curatorial procedures for KAUM specimens followed Motomura and Ishikawa (2013) [2], and institutional codes, as per Sabaj (2020) [3]. Benzocaine was used as an anesthetic.

3. Results

Eugnathogobius ganuensis n. sp.

[New English name: High-fin Brackish Goby; new standard Malay name: Belodok Ganu]

Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 6B–D and Figure 7; Table 1

Holotype. UMTF 13296, male, 30.0 mm SL, drainage ditch at Jalan Permint Perdana, Seberang Takir, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia, 5 cm depth, 18 July 2025.

Paratypes. Four specimens (27.5–31.5 mm SL: 3 males and 1 female). KAUM–I. 219716, male, 31.5 mm SL, KAUM–I. 219718, male, 27.0 mm SL, UMTF 13297, male, 30.3 mm SL, KAUM–I. 219721, female, 27.5 mm SL, same data as holotype.

Diagnosis. A species of *Eugnathogobius* distinguished from all other congeners by the following combination of characters: 16 segmented caudal-fin rays; 30 or 31 longitudinal scale rows; upper jaw short, not well extended in both sexes (upper-jaw length 14.8–18.1% of SL); high first dorsal fin, especially in males; first dorsal-fin first spine length 13.0–18.1% of SL; first dorsal-fin second spine length 16.8–36.4% in SL; no head pores; shoulder with oblique black band; transverse black markings on each scale; paired black blotches on caudal-fin base; distinct black dots on upper caudal fin; throat yellowish in fresh specimens; and second dorsal fin yellowish in fresh specimens.

Description. Counts and measurements shown in Table 1. Data for holotype first, then data for paratypes in parentheses (if different). Body elongated, compressed posteriorly, maximum height at pelvic-fin origin (Figures 1 and 2). Head large, slightly compressed. Snout rounded, almost same length as eye. Eye located anteriorly on dorsolateral aspect of head. Interorbital space wide. Anterior nostril just behind upper lip, with a short tube, tip not extending over upper lip. Posterior nostril in front of anterior margin of eye, its diameter less than half that of pupil. Mouth terminal, forming angle of 45° with body axis, gape relatively wide; end of maxilla extending beyond midpoint of eye. Gill opening narrow, with smooth margin, extending from uppermost point of pectoral-fin base to slightly below pectoral-fin base (Figure 3). Anus located slightly posterior to ventral midpoint of body. Urogenital papilla elongated, pointed (rounded in female).

First dorsal fin high (Figures 1 and 2); second and third spines especially elongated; second spines with short filament; tip of depressed first dorsal fin over second dorsal-fin base (first dorsal fin rounded without elongated spine in female; spines relatively shorter in smaller male than in holotype). Second dorsal fin lower than first dorsal fin, not connected

to first dorsal fin (almost same height in females); origin posterior to anus; spine slightly lower than first soft ray; sixth ray longest. Anal fin slightly lower than second dorsal fin; origin just below second dorsal-fin origin; spine shorter than soft rays; posteriormost ray longest; end of base slightly behind end of second dorsal-fin base. Pectoral fin rounded; fin base just behind gill opening; tip not quite extending to above anus. Pelvic fin connecting membranes forming disc; origin below pectoral-fin base; fifth soft ray longest; depressed fin tip not reaching anus. Caudal fin large, rounded.

Predorsal scales cycloid; anterior part of scales larger; anteriormost scale reaching interorbital space. Opercle (except lower part) with cycloid scales. Cheek completely naked. Anterior and posterior part of body with cycloid and ctenoid scales, respectively; boundary between ctenoid and cycloid scales from below posterior part of first dorsal-fin base to slightly above anus. Pectoral-fin base and prepelvic-fin area with cycloid scales, shallowly embedded under thin skin. All fins scaleless, except for basal part of caudal fin with several ctenoid and a few cycloid scales.

Sensory system (Figure 3**).** Head without canals and pores. Preopercle with a papillae row extending partly along lower margin, upturned posteriorly.

Color in live/fresh specimens (Figures 1 and 2**).** Ground color relatively pale brown. Transverse narrow pattern on each body scale. Somewhat indistinct oblique black band from nape to just behind pectoral-fin base; left and right sides of band barely connecting at mid-dorsum. Two longitudinal black bands posterodorsal and posteroventral to eye. Oblique black band from anteroventral to eye to just behind upper lip. Lower part of opercle black; black area of opercle anteriorly barely connecting with lower bar from eye. Upper lip slightly yellowish. Ventral head yellow, partially reddish. Dorsal fins yellowish to orange. Distinct dots on second dorsal-fin elements, absent from first dorsal-fin spines. Distal margin of second dorsal fin with narrow white margin. Anal fin orange with white distal margin, black submarginally. Pectoral fin almost semi-translucent whitish, yellowish basally, blackish ventrally. Pectoral-fin base with longitudinal black band. Caudal fin orange, yellowish dorsally, and slightly reddish ventrally; each ray (except for lower part) with black dots; thin white ventral margin. Caudal-fin base with distinct black blotches, a single narrow transverse black stripe just behind paired blotches.

Color after preservation (Figure 4**).** Body grayish-brown. Black pattern persisting in fresh specimens, other colors lost.

Distribution and ecological notes. *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* sp. nov. is currently known only from the type locality, a drainage ditch, comprising concrete blocks, on the lower reach of the Terengganu River basin (Figures 5 and 6). A shallow layer of sandy sediment covered the bottom surface. The ditch contained fresh water (0‰) at low tide, although included in a tidal area, the water level changed with incoming/outgoing tide. *Mugilogobius chulae*, *Mugilogobius rambaiae*, and *Oxyeleotris urophthalmus* were observed together with *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* (Figure 6C).

Etymology. The specific name "*ganuensis*" refers to the local dialect of the Malaysian state of Terengganu, where the species was found.

Table 1. Counts and measurements of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp.

	Holotype	**Paratypes**			
	UMTF 13296	KAUM–I. 219716	KAUM–I. 219718	UMTF 13297	KAUM–I. 219721
Standard length (mm)	30.0	31.5	27.0	30.3	27.5
Counts					
Dorsal-fin rays	VI-I, 7	VI-I, 7	VI-I, 7	VI-I, 7	VI-I, 7
Anal-fin rays	I, 7	I, 7	I, 8	I, 8	I, 7
Pectoral-fin rays	18	18	18	18	18
Pelvic-fin rays	I, 5	I, 5	I, 5	I, 5	I,5
Caudal-fin segmented rays	16	16	16	16	16
Longitudinal scale rows	31	30	30	31	31
TRF	12	11	12	12	11
TRB-1	10	9	9	10	8
TRB-2	10	8	8	9	8
Pre-dorsal-fin scale rows	15	11	12	11	12
Pre-pelvic-fin scale rows	10	9	8	8	8
Circumpeduncular scales	12	12	12	12	12
Vertebrae	10 + 16	10 + 16	10 + 16	10 + 16	10 + 16
P-V pattern	3/12210/9	3/12210/9	3/12210/9	3/12210/9	3/12210/9
AP	2	2	2	2	2
Measurements (%SL)					
Head length	30.4	28.4	29.0	29.0	28.9
Head depth	16.6	15.0	15.3	16.3	15.2
Head width	19.9	19.1	17.4	19.0	19.3
Body depth at pelvic-fin origin	19.0	18.6	17.7	19.8	19.2
Body depth at anal-fin origin	20.1	18.6	18.3	20.5	19.7
Caudal-peduncle length	27.7	28.7	23.5	30.1	28.4
Caudal-peduncle depth	14.2	14.0	14.8	14.5	13.6
Snout length	7.1	6.7	6.5	6.3	6.9
Eye diameter	6.8	7.1	7.1	6.9	7.4
Upper-jaw length	14.8	14.2	13.8	14.2	11.3
Pre-first-dorsal-fin length	38.7	38.1	38.0	37.6	38.4
Pre-second-dorsal-fin length	58.5	57.8	56.6	58.1	57.1
D1-D2	20.2	20.2	20.3	21.2	20.7
Pre-anal-fin length	58.6	57.6	58.3	55.9	56.9
Pre-pelvic-fin length	30.6	29.3	30.1	29.2	29.4
First dorsal-fin 1st spine length	18.1	17.3	17.3	16.6	13.0
First dorsal-fin 2nd spine length	36.4	31.5	21.7	22.7	16.8
Second dorsal-fin spine length	12.2	11.9	12.7	11.2	10.9
Second dorsal-fin longest soft ray length	17.3	17.3	16.0	17.6	13.0
Anal-fin spine length	7.1	7.8	7.5	6.2	7.0
Anal-fin longest soft ray length	19.7	17.8	15.8	16.9	15.1
Pectoral-fin length	22.8	22.4	23.9	22.5	22.7
Pelvic-fin length	18.5	17.2	16.2	16.7	16.0
Caudal-fin length	29.6	28.0	28.3	30.2	24.0



Figure 1. Fresh holotype (male) of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. (UMTF 13296, 30.0 mm SL).



Figure 2. Fresh paratypes of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. ((**A**): KAUM–I. 219716, male; (**B**): KAUM–I. 219718, male; (**C**): UMTF 13297, male; (**D**): KAUM–I. 219721, female).

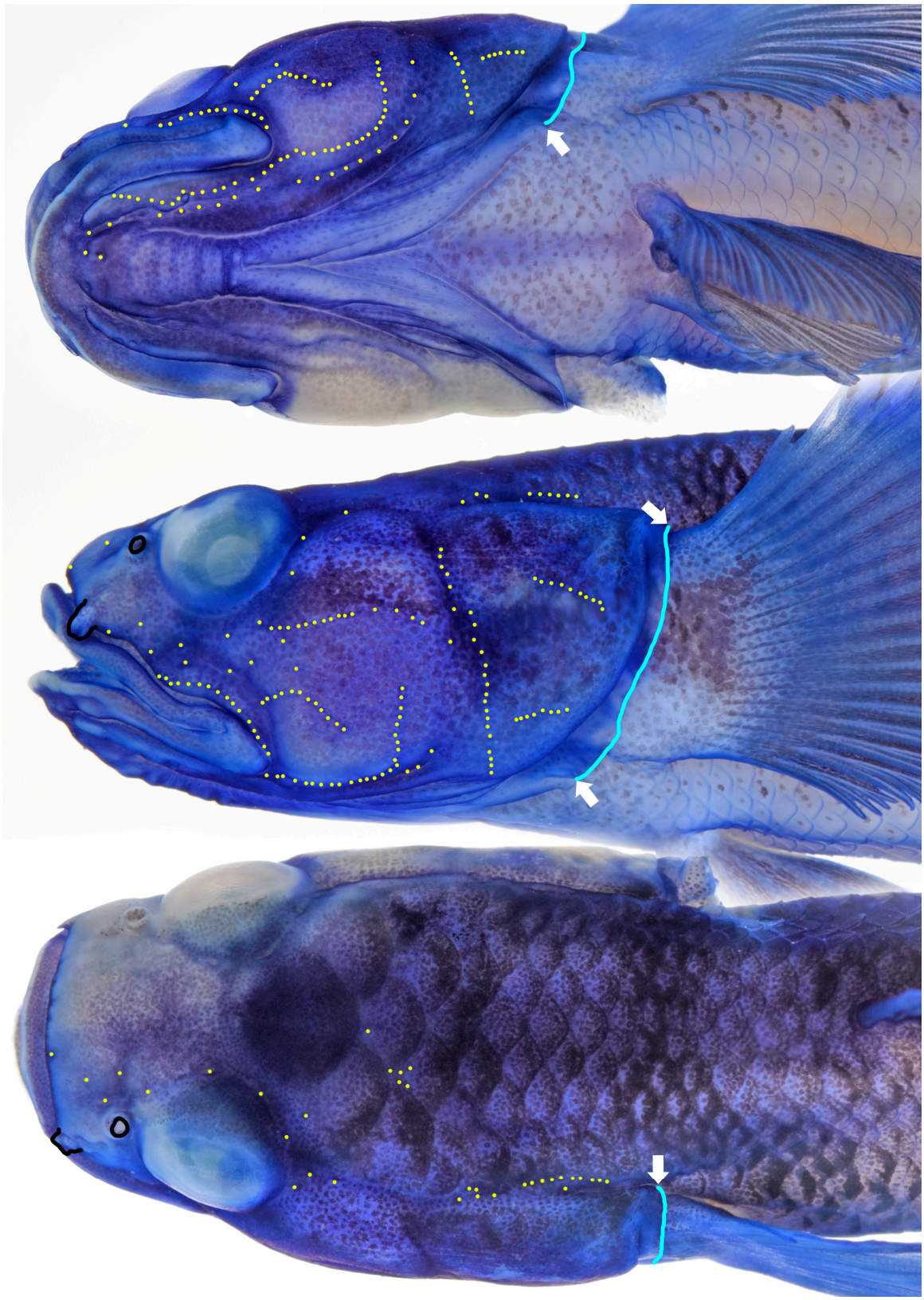


Figure 3. Head of preserved holotype of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. (UMTF 13296: temporarily stained with cyanine blue), showing head sensory system (yellow dots: sensory papillae; arrows: upper and lower end of gill opening).



Figure 4. Preserved specimens of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. ((**A**): UMTF 13296, male; (**B**): KAUM–I. 219716, male; (**C**): KAUM–I. 219718, male; (**D**): UMTF 13297, male; (**E**): KAUM–I. 219721, female).

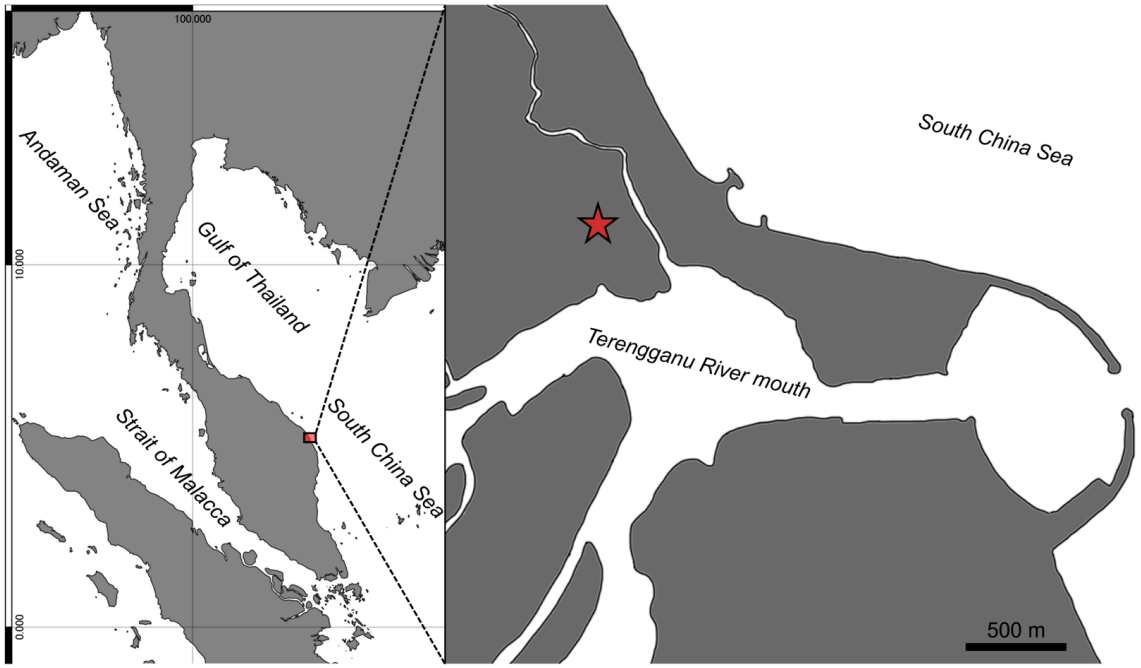


Figure 5. Map of the type locality of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. (Red star: sampling point), prepared using QGIS v. 3.40.2.

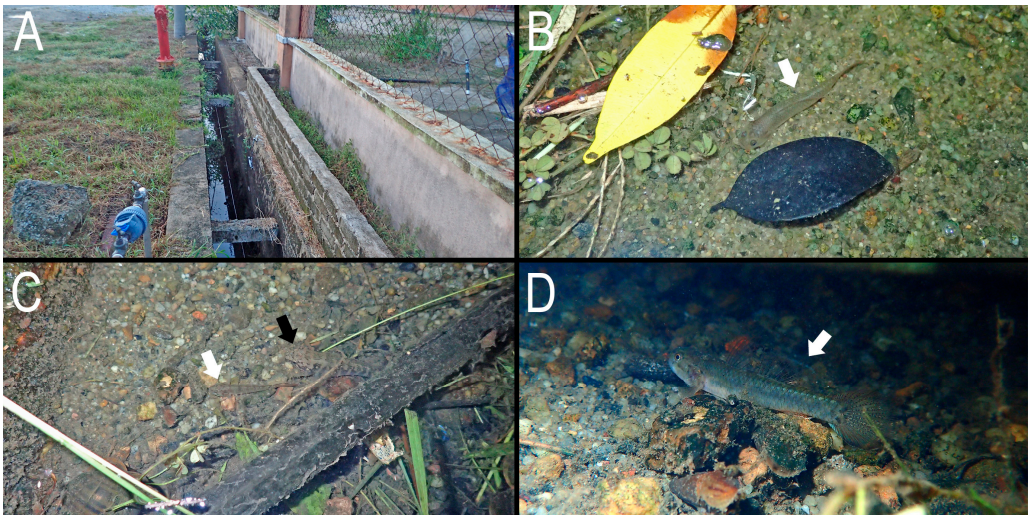


Figure 6. Type locality (**A**) and live individuals (**B**–**D**) of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp., Terengganu, Peninsular Malaysia. White and black arrows indicate *E. ganuensis* n. sp. and *Oxyeleotris urophthalmus*, respectively.

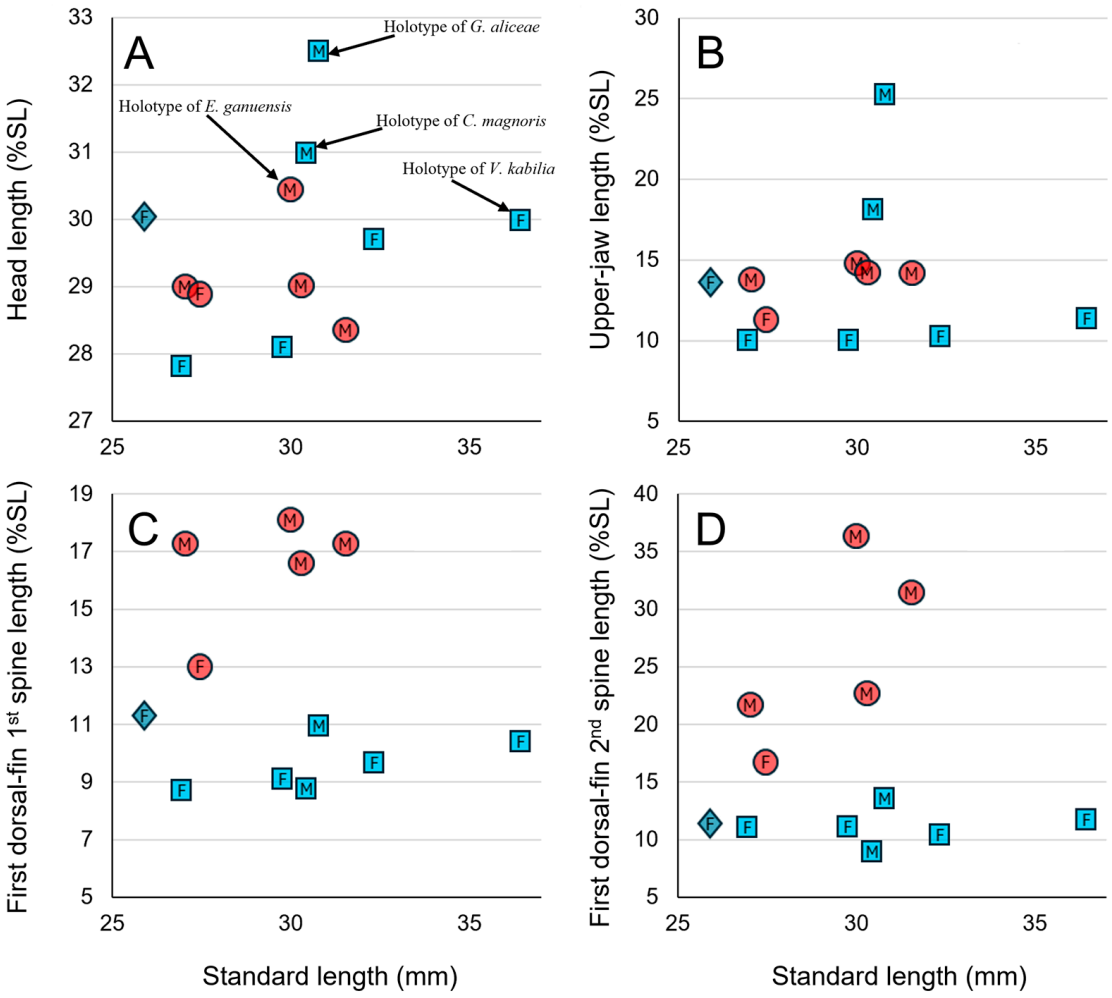


Figure 7. Relationships of head length as % SL (**A**), upper-jaw length (**B**), and lengths of first and second spines of first dorsal fin (**C**,**D**) with standard length (mm) of *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* n. sp. (circles); *E. kabilia* (squares); *E.* cf. *kabilia* (diamond). M and F indicating meles and females of each species, respectively.

4. Discussion

Eugnathogobius Smith, 1931 is a small estuarine gobiid genus, later revised by Larson (2009) [1], who recognized nine valid species: *E. variegatus* (Peters, 1869); *E. microps* Smith, 1931; *E. siamensis* (Fowler, 1934); *E. kabilia* (Herre, 1940); *E. mindora* (Herre, 1945); *E. polylepis* (Wu and Ni, 1985); *E. illotus* (Larson, 1999); *E. indicus* Larson, 2009; and *E. stictos* Larson, 2009, and later (Larson et al., 2022) [4] resurrected *E. mas* (Hora, 1923) as a senior synonym of *E. microps*. However, recent studies have proposed splitting the genus. Huang et al. (2013) [5] utilized morphological and molecular approaches to *Eugnathogobius sensu* Larson (2009), established *Wuhanlinigobius* Huang, Jaafar and Chen, 2013 based on *Mugilogobius polylepis* (=*E. polylepis*), newly described *Wuhanlinigobius malayensis* Huang, Jaafar and Chen (2013), and regarded *Calamiana* Herre, 1945 as a valid genus, including *E. mindora*, *E. illotus*, and *E. variegatus* as species of the latter, based on the presence of head pores and the medium-sized mouth in adult males. However, the nominal name "*Calamiana*" is not considered to be suitable for the taxon for *E. mindora*, *E. illotus*, and *E. variegatus*, because their *Calamiana* did not include *Calamiana magnoris* Herre, 1945 type species of *Calamiana* [1,6,7], and recognized by Larson (2009) [1] as *Eugnathogobius kabilia*, having a large mouth in adult males and lacking head pores. Subsequently, *Calamiana taiwanensis* Chen, Shao and Huang, 2024 was described, being closely similar to *E. mindora* [8]. Several studies failed to follow Huang et al.'s (2013) [5] suggestion [9,10] due to the latter's analysis lacking several valid species of *Eugnathogobius sensu* Larson (2009). Chen et al. (2024) [8] also proposed a key to species of *Calamiana*, but did not include *C. magnoris* (=*E. kabilia*), the type species of *Calamiana* [1,7]. Clearly, several taxonomic problems of *Eugnathogobius* and related genera still persist. Although further study of the generic status of *Eugnathogobius* and related genera is required, a total of 11 species [9 valid species recognized by Larson (2009) [1] and Larson (2022) [4], *W. malayensis*, and *C. taiwanensis*] can be recognized as members of *Eugnathogobius sensu lato*.

According to Larson (2009) [1], Huang et al. (2013) [5], Larson et al. (2022) [4], and Chen et al. (2024) [8], and confirmed by the present study, *Eugnathogobius ganuensis* is easily distinguished from all other species of *Eugnathogobius sensu lato* (see above) by having 16 segmented caudal-fin rays, 30 or 31 longitudinal scale rows, a high first dorsal fin (especially in males), the absence of head pores, oblique black bands on the shoulder, transverse black markings on each scale, paired black blotches on the caudal-fin base, and distinct black dots on the upper caudal fin. *Eugnathogobius kabilia* is most similar to *E. ganuensis*, having similar meristic counts, two distinct brown stripes extending posteriorly from the eye, an oblique band on the shoulder, and transverse markings on each scale, plus similar overall fresh coloration, although the latter differs as follows (Larson 2009 [1]; Nagao Natural Environment Foundation 2021 [9]; this study: Figures 1, 2, 4 and 7): short upper jaw in males, the length < 14.8–18.1% of SL (well extended in males of *E. kabilia*: Figure 6B); first dorsal fin relatively higher, especially in males (low, rounded: lower than second dorsal fin: Figure 7C,D); yellow throat (whiteish), and yellowish second dorsal fin when fresh (reddish in males). Although few specimens of *E. kabilia* were available, males of the species had a greater head length (31.0–32.5% of SL) than females (27.8–30.0% of SL), compared with no difference between the sexes of *E. ganuensis* (28.4–30.4% of SL: Figure 7A).

The two species, *Eugnathogobius taiwanensis* and *E. mindora*, are similar to *E. ganuensis* in having the high first dorsal fin and the pore less head. However, the former two species are distinguished from the new species by the following characteristics [1,7], especially in color patterns: narrow oblique stripes on cheek (absent in *E. ganuensis*); no distinct pattern on lateral scales (transverse pattern on most lateral scales); pectoral-fin rays 15–18 in *E. taiwanensis* and 10–17 in *E. mindora* (18); longitudinal scale rows 34–37 in *E. taiwanensis* and 27–39 in *E. mindora* (30 or 31); TRB-2 12 or 13 in *E. taiwanensis* and 9–14 in *E. mindora*

(8–10). The necessity of further study on *E. mindora* was suggested by Larson [7]. Although *E. mindora* exhibits relatively wide variations in meristics and the head pore patterns, it may be due to geographic variation or the presence of cryptic species included within *E. mindora*.

Remarks. During a survey of USNM specimens, it became clear that one of two paratypes of *Mugilogobius rambaiae* (USNM 359628, 29.8 mm SL: Figure 8E), now recognized as *E. kabilia* (Larson 2009) [11], had 38 longitudinal scale rows, considerably more than the range of longitudinal scale row numbers for that species (25–34: Larson 2009 [1]). Moreover, one specimen from Myanmar (USNM 372148, 25.9 mm SL: Figure 9) also had high scale count numbers (39 longitudinal scale rows; 18 TRF; 11 TRB-1; and 12 TRB-2). Because the paratype (above) of *M. rambaiae* matched the diagnosis for *E. kabilia* (except for longitudinal scale counts), the difference in the latter number is regarded as intraspecific variation in the species. On the other hand, the Myanmar specimen (above) also differed in transverse scale number from the anal fin origin to the first dorsal-fin base (18 vs. 9–15: this study). Therefore, it is here tentatively regarded as *E.* cf. *kabilia*, further study being necessary to reveal if the difference indicates intraspecific variation within *E. kabilia* or the existence of a cryptic species.



Figure 8. Preserved specimens of *Eugnathogobius kabilia* [holotype of *Vaimosa kabilia*, CAS-SU 32978, female, 36.4 mm SL (**A**); paratype of *Vaimosa kabilia*, CAS-SU 32979, female, 32.3 mm SL (**B**); paratype of *Gnathogobius aliceae*, USNM 119605, male, 30.8 mm SL (**C**); holotype of *Calamiana magnoris*, CAS-SU 39881, male, 30.4 mm SL (**D**); USNM 372148, paratypes of *Vaimosa rambaiae*, females, 29.8 mm SL (**E**) and 26.9 mm SL (**F**)].

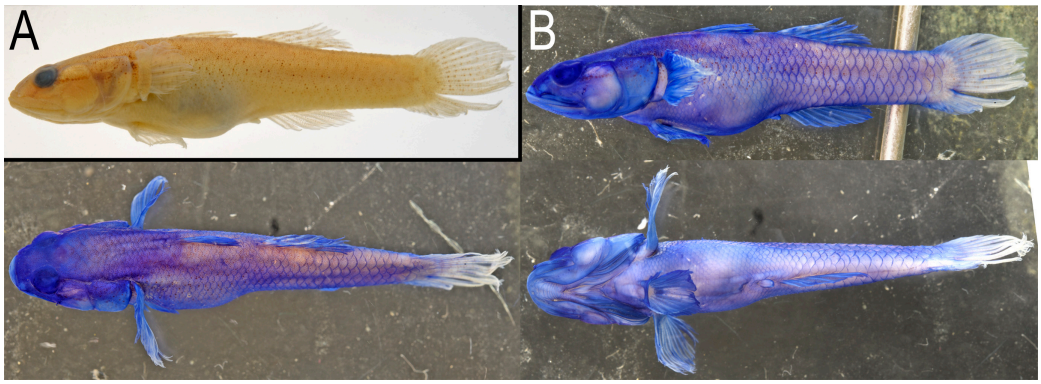


Figure 9. Preserved specimen of *Eugnathogobius* cf. *kabilia* (USNM 372148, female, 25.9 mm SL; (**A**): not stained; (**B**): temporarily stained with cyanine blue).

Tamanka umbra Herre, 1927 was also regarded as belonging to *Eugnathogobius* by Larson (2001) [9] and Kottelat (2013) [12]. If such is the case, the species is similar to *E. ganuensis* in having a high first dorsal fin [13,14]. However, *T. umbra* differs from the latter in having numerous longitudinal scale rows (38 in *T. umbra* vs. 30 or 31 in *E. ganuensis*) and irregular blotches on the first dorsal fin [present (especially between the third and fourth spines, and posteriorly) vs. absent] (Herre, 1927 [13]; Koumans, 1940 [14]; this study). Unfortunately, the syntypes of *T. umbra* have been destroyed (Larson, 2001) [11].

The type locality of *E. ganuensis* is not a natural environmental feature. Because the ditch contained only fresh water (0‰) at low tide, despite being included in the tidal area, the true habitat of the species is suggested as being the upper reaches of the Terengganu River estuary. This suggests a limited habitat, with high habitat preference by the species.

Comparative materials. *Eugnathogobius kabilia* (6 specimens: 26.9–36.4 mm SL): CAS-SU 32978, holotype of *Vaimosa kabilia*, female, 36.4 mm SL (Figure 8A); CAS-SU 32979, paratype of *Vaimosa kabilia*, female, 32.3 mm SL (Figure 8B); USNM 119605, paratype of *Gnathogobius aliceae*, male, 30.8 mm SL (Figure 8C); CAS-SU 39881, holotype of *Calamiana magnoris*, male, 30.4 mm SL (Figure 8D); USNM 372148, paratypes of *Vaimosa rambaiae*, females, 29.8 mm SL (Figure 8E) and 26.9 mm SL (Figure 8F). *Eugnathogobius* cf. *kabilia*: USNM 372148, female, 25.9 mm SL.

Author Contributions: R.K. wrote the manuscript, read and approved by Y.G.S. and H.M. Conceptualization, R.K.; methodology, R.K.; validation, R.K.; formal analysis, R.K.; investigation, R.K.; resources, R.K., Y.G.S., and H.M.; data curation, R.K.; writing—original draft preparation, R.K.; writing—review and editing, R.K., Y.G.S., and H.M.; visualization, R.K.; supervision, H.M.; project administration, R.K., Y.G.S., and H.M.; funding acquisition, R.K., Y.G.S. and H.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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