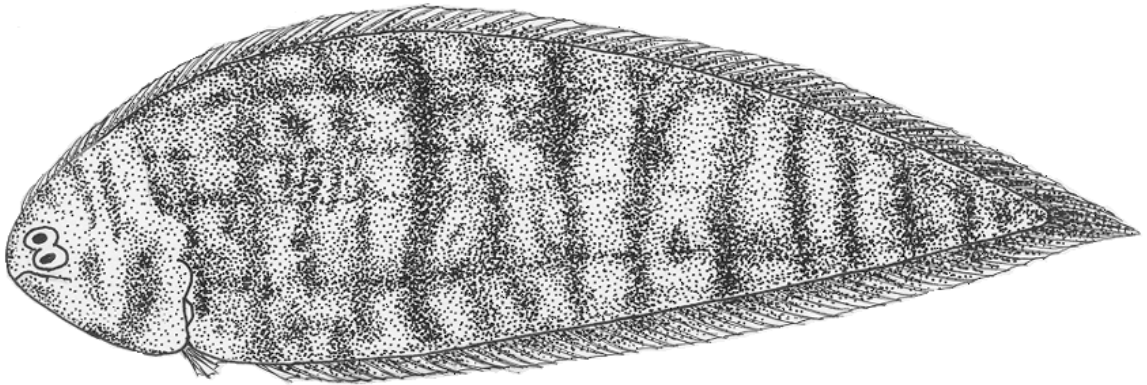


***Symphurus civitatum*** Ginsburg, 1951

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / *Symphurus plagiusa* (Linnaeus, 1766).

**FAO Names:** En - Offshore tonguefish.

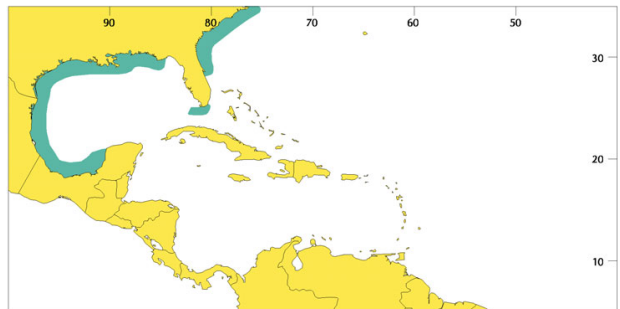


**Diagnostic characters:** Body relatively deep; greatest depth in anterior 1/3 of body; tapering gradually posterior to midpoint. Head wide; head length shorter than head width. **Snout short; somewhat square. Lower eye small** (70 to 110 thousandths of head length); eyes slightly subequal. **Pupillary operculum absent. Maxilla usually reaching posteriorly to point between verticals through middle and posterior margin of lower eye pupil. Ocular-side lower jaw with distinct, fleshy ridge. Dorsal-fin rays 86 to 93. Dorsal-fin origin usually slightly anterior to vertical through anterior margin of eye. Anal-fin rays 70 to 78. Scales usually absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays; occasionally with 1 to 3 small scales at fin ray bases. Caudal-fin rays usually 12. Longitudinal scale rows 66 to 83. ID pattern usually 1-4-3. Total vertebrae 46 to 50, usually 47 to 49. Colour:** ocular surface light to dark brown; occasionally with 6 to 14 narrow, sometimes sharply contrasting crossbands. Crossbands not continued onto dorsal and anal fins. **Dorsal margin of outer surface of ocular-side opercle often with dusky blotch due to dark pigmentation of inner lining of opercle showing through to outer surface. Inner lining of opercle and isthmus on ocular side usually heavily pigmented. Blind side off-white, without pepper-dots. Peritoneum unpigmented. Dorsal and anal fins without conspicuous spots or blotches. Caudal fin without spots or blotches.**

**Size:** Maximum about 152 mm standard length, commonly 80 to 140 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Collected on sand or silty sediments over a wide depth range (1 to 73 m, but rarely deeper than 60 m), with centre of abundance of adults between 11 and 45 m. Juveniles occur in estuaries. Geographic and bathymetric distributions coincide with distribution of terrigenous, quartzite sandy and silty sediments on the inner continental shelf. Generally absent from soft silt, shell hash, or live bottom areas. Males and females attain similar sizes. Females mature at sizes usually larger than 90 mm standard length. Locally abundant and contributing to bycatch in shrimp trawl fisheries. Of minor commercial importance in industrial fisheries.

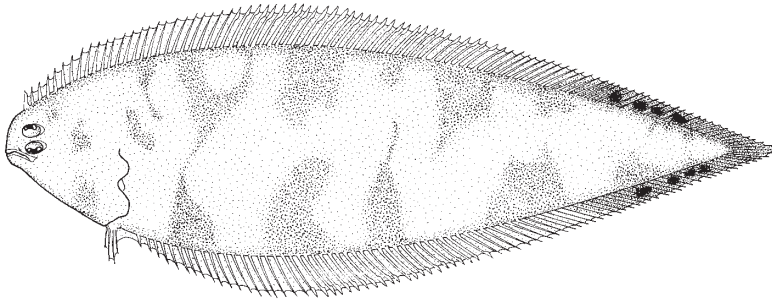
**Distribution:** Western North Atlantic from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to coastal lagoons and continental shelf of southern Gulf of Mexico (Cabo Rojo, Veracruz, to Sabuncuy, Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico). A single record from Bermuda. Generally absent from western Florida shelf and eastern Gulf of Mexico, occasionally from Tortugas region. Most common west of Apalachicola Bay, Florida. One of the most commonly collected tonguefishes on the inner shelf from Alabama to Texas.



***Symphurus diomedeanus*** (Goode and Bean, 1885)

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** *Symphurus pterospilotus* Ginsburg, 1951 / None.

**FAO names:** **En** - Spottedfin tonguefish; **Fr** - Langue fil noir; **Sp** - Lengua filnegro.

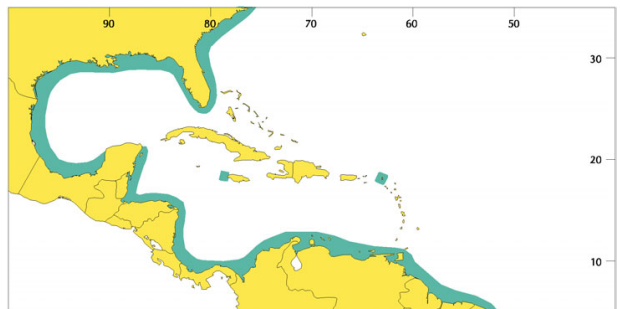


**Diagnostic characters:** Body moderately deep; maximum depth in anterior 1/3 of body; tapering fairly rapidly posterior to midpoint. Head moderately long and narrow; head length shorter than head width. **Lower eye relatively large;** eyes usually equal in position. **Pupillary operculum well developed. Ocular-side lower jaw without obvious fleshy ridge. Ocular-side upper jaw usually without teeth,** occasionally with few teeth at margin of premaxillary symphysis. **Dorsal-fin rays 86 to 96. Anal-fin rays 69 to 80. Scales usually absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays; occasionally 1 or 2 scales at base of fin rays, especially in larger specimens. Caudal-fin rays usually 10. Longitudinal scale rows 79 to 96. ID pattern usually 1-4-3. Total vertebrae 47 to 50, usually 48 to 50. Colour:** ocular surface usually uniformly dark brown; occasionally with faint traces of variable number of wide crossbands. Crossbands, when present, usually incomplete across body and not continued onto dorsal and anal fins. Specimens collected from light-coloured sediments usually with uniform light brown or yellowish coloration on ocular surface. **Blind side uniformly creamy white to yellowish; without pepper-dots. Peritoneum unpigmented.** Dorsal and anal fins **usually with 1 to 5 conspicuous, rounded, dark brown or black spots on each fin,** situated about midway between bases and distal tips of finrays. Caudal fin uniformly dark brown or black; unusual specimens with single, rounded, non-ocellated spot eccentrically placed on distal 1/3 of fin.

**Size:** Maximum 207 mm standard length, commonly to 190 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Occurring on the inner continental shelf on sediments consisting of calcareous mud, calcareous sand, and those with a large component of shell hash, sometimes also on hard mud; rarely on soft mud or quartz sand substrates; not found in reef areas. Collected at depths of 6 to 183 m, with centre of abundance between 21 and 80 m; rarely taken deeper than 100 m. Juveniles rarely captured. Adults rarely taken shallower than 20 m, and not found in estuaries. Collected off west Florida at bottom temperatures ranging from 17.5 to 28°C and salinities of 32.3 to 36.7‰. Diet consists of benthic invertebrates, including small crabs, polychaetes, gastropods, bivalves, gastropod eggs, and amphipods. This is the third largest of the Atlantic symphurine tonguefishes. Females mature at 90 to 120 mm standard length. Considered very common in depths greater than 18 and shallower than 80 m along the southeastern USA and eastern Gulf of Mexico. Off the southeastern USA, *S. diomedeanus* is numerically the most common tonguefish. Contributes to bycatch of shrimp trawl fisheries and of minor importance in industrial fish landings. Separate statistics not reported for this species. Caught mainly with bottom trawls; not marketed in large quantities.

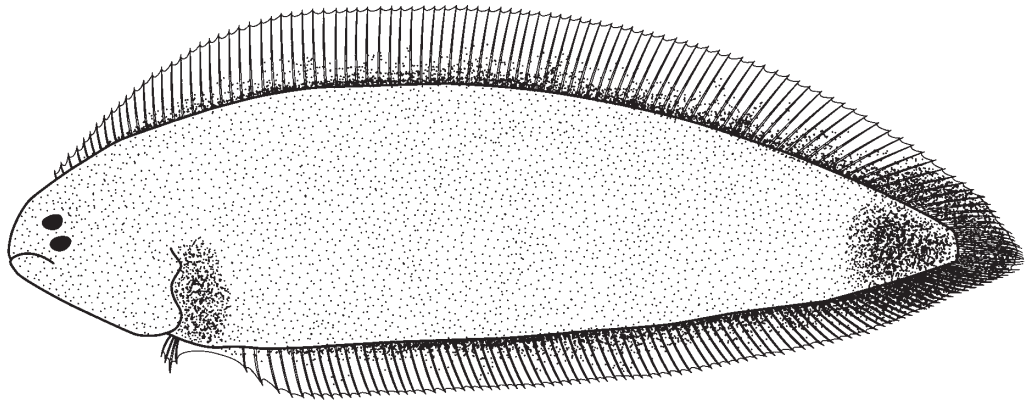
**Distribution:** Inner continental shelf from just north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina (35°23'N), along the southeastern Atlantic coast of the USA, through the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea to about Isla de Flores (34°56'S, 55°53'W), Uruguay. Rarely reported from Antilles with records from shallow waters south of Jamaica and off the Virgin Islands. Common in shallow waters off Yucatán, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Guyana to northern Brazil.



***Symphurus marginatus* (Goode and Bean, 1886)**

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / None.

**FAO names:** En - Margined tonguefish.

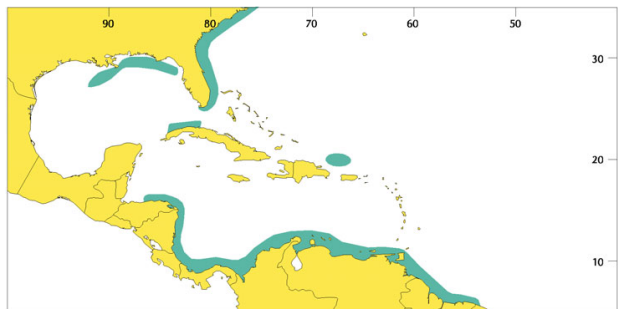


**Diagnostic characters:** Body relatively elongate; of nearly uniform width along anterior 2/3, with gradual taper posteriorly. Head moderately long and relatively narrow; head length usually just slightly wider than long. Lower eye large; eyes usually equal in position, with large and obvious lens. Anterior and medial surfaces of eyes partially covered with 4 to 6 small ctenoid scales. **Pupillary operculum absent.** Snout short, somewhat pointed. Maxilla extending posteriorly to vertical through anterior margin of lower eye. Ocular-side lower jaw without fleshy ridge. **Ocular-side dentary with row of teeth along complete margin of jaw; ocular-side premaxilla usually with single row of teeth along anterior 4/5 of margin of jaw, occasionally with complete tooth row.** **Dorsal-fin rays 93 to 104.** Dorsal-fin origin usually at point between verticals through midpoint and posterior margin of upper eye. **Anal-fin rays 80 to 89.** Scales absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays. **Caudal-fin rays 12.** **Longitudinal scale rows 86 to 99.** **ID pattern usually 1-3-2.** **Total vertebrae 51 to 56, usually 52 to 54.** **Hypurals 4, less frequently 5.** **Colour:** ocular surface usually uniformly dark brown, sometimes with yellowish tint, without crossbands; and with dark brown blotch, roughly circular in outline, usually covering entire caudal region and occasionally extending onto caudal-fin base. Blind side off-white, or yellowish; without pepper-dots. Peritoneum black. Dorsal and anal fins in anterior 2/3 of body with dark brown or black longitudinal stripe along fin-ray bases; distal half of those fin rays unpigmented or only lightly pigmented. Dorsal and anal fins heavily pigmented in caudal region of body, especially proximate to caudal blotch. Caudal fin usually heavily pigmented on proximal half; distal half lightly pigmented.

**Size:** Maximum about 146 mm standard length; commonly 80 to 120 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Inhabiting soft mud sediments on the outer continental shelf and upper continental slope at depths of 37 to 832 m, with a centre of abundance between 320 and 550 m. Rarely collected shallower than 300 m. Females attain somewhat larger sizes than males. Specimens less than 80 mm standard length are rarely collected. Females mature at ca. 79 to 90 mm standard length. Little else is known concerning life history of this species. Of no commercial interest.

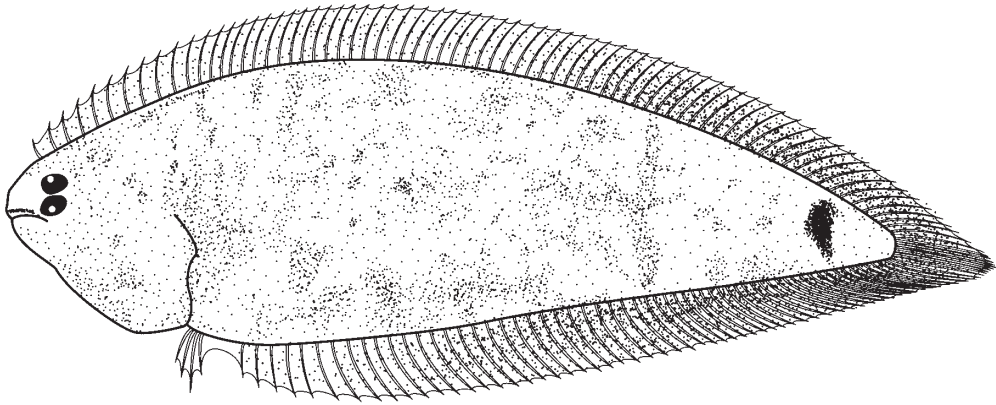
**Distribution:** Outer continental shelf and upper slope off New Jersey southward along eastern USA, in eastern and central regions of the Gulf of Mexico (to Louisiana, 91°18'W), in Straits of Florida off the Bahamas and north of Puerto Rico, off northern Cuba, widespread throughout the southern Caribbean Sea from Honduras to Venezuela, and from Trinidad and Tobago to southeastern Brazil (21°34'S). Majority of specimens taken off southern Florida, eastern and central regions of the Gulf of Mexico, and throughout the southern Caribbean Sea. Of no interest to commercial fisheries.



*Symphurus minor* Ginsburg, 1951

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / *Symphurus parvus* Ginsburg, 1951.

**FAO names:** En - Largescale tonguefish.

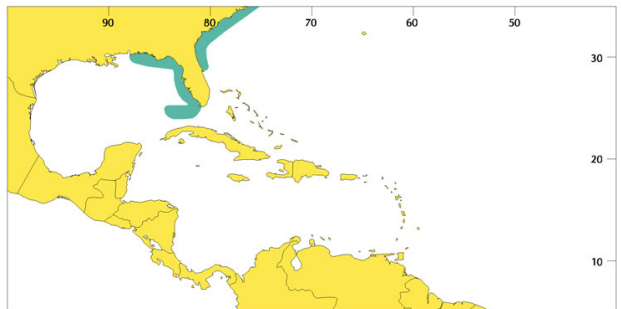


**Diagnostic characters:** Body moderately deep; maximum depth in anterior 1/3 of body; tapering rapidly in posterior 2/3 of body. Head length usually shorter than head width. Snout short and pointed. Lower eye relatively large; eyes usually equal in position. Anterior and medial surfaces of eyes usually not covered with scales. **Pupillary operculum well developed.** Maxilla usually extending posteriorly to point between verticals through anterior margin of pupil and middle of lower eye. **Ocular-side lower jaw without fleshy ridge. Teeth usually covering entire margin of ocular-side dentary. Single row of slender teeth on anterior 1/2 to three-fourths of margin of ocular-side premaxilla (usually extending posteriorly to vertical through anterior base of anterior nostril).** Dorsal-fin rays 69 to 81. Anal-fin rays 55 to 64. Basal region of dorsal-fin membrane from about seventh dorsal-fin ray and backwards, and anal-fin membrane throughout entire length of fin, with series of openings (membrane ostia) between fin rays. Scales absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays. Caudal-fin rays usually 10. Longitudinal scale rows 55 to 67. ID pattern usually 1-4-2. Total vertebrae 41 to 44, usually 41 to 43. **Colour:** ocular surface usually light brown or straw-coloured with variable number and arrangement of irregular dusky markings and well-developed dark brown blotch slightly anterior to caudal-fin base; occasional specimens with rather faint, dark brown crossbands. **Blind side uniformly white or yellowish, without pepper-dots. Peritoneum unpigmented. Dorsal and anal fins lightly pigmented anteriorly, becoming darker posteriorly, but without distinct spots or blotches.** Scaly base of caudal fin with small, darkly pigmented area.

**Size:** Maximum about 78 mm standard length, commonly 40 to 60 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Collected primarily on live-bottom areas on the inner continental shelf at 18 to 170 m, with a centre of abundance between 20 and 60 m. Common along the continental shelf of the southeastern USA. Collected in water temperatures of 18.5 to 23.3°C and salinities of 35 to 36.5‰. Males and females attain similar sizes. Females mature at 29 to 40 mm standard length. Spawning takes place during summertime. Gravid females collected primarily June through September. Although collected frequently, this species has not been taken in any abundance. Of no commercial importance.

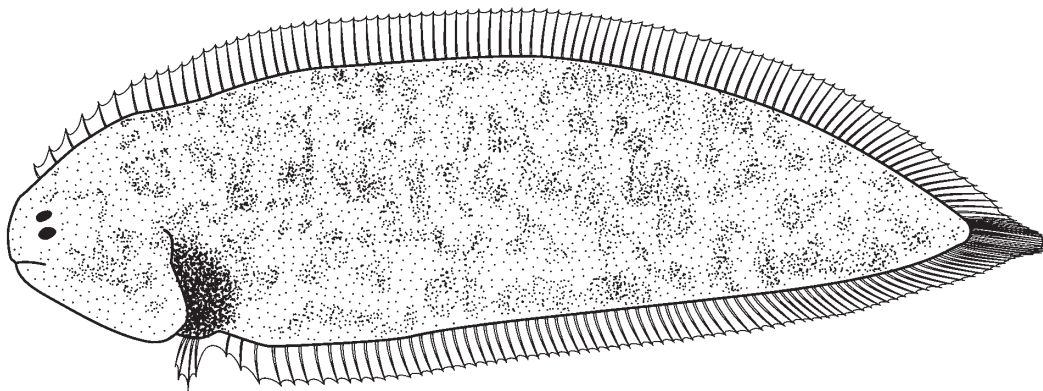
**Distribution:** Western North Atlantic primarily from North Carolina southward to Florida, in the eastern Gulf of Mexico including west coast of Florida, west to region of DeSoto Canyon. Majority of specimens collected off southeastern Florida and the inner continental shelf off west Florida. Not reported from central and western regions of the Gulf of Mexico, and is thus far unknown from live-bottom substrates off the Yucatán Peninsula. Along Atlantic coast, occurs commonly to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and rarely off the Nova Scotian shelf as expatriated individuals transported northward by the Gulf Stream.



***Symphurus nebulosus*** (Goode and Bean, 1883)

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / None.

**FAO Names:** En - Freckled tonguefish.

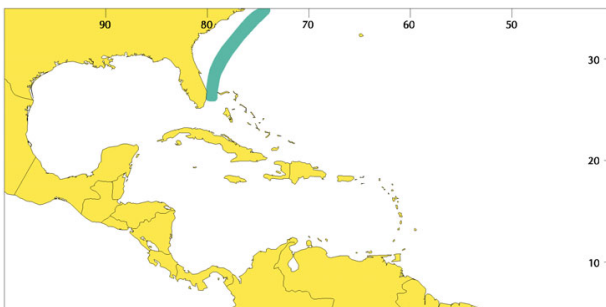


**Diagnostic characters:** Body notably slender, of nearly uniform width (165 to 282 thousandths of standard length, usually 225 to 240 thousandths of standard length) for most of length with gradual posterior taper. Head long and narrow; head length slightly shorter than head width. Snout short and rounded. Lower eye small; subelliptical. Anterior and medial surfaces of eyes usually without scales. **Pupillary operculum absent.** Maxilla usually extending posteriorly to point between verticals through anterior margin of pupil and anterior margin of lower eye. Ocular-side lower jaw without fleshy ridge. **Teeth well developed on all jaws.** **Dorsal-fin rays 105 to 113.** Anteriormost dorsal-fin rays shorter and with wider separation between bases than posterior fin rays. **Anal-fin rays 91 to 98.** Scales absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays. **Caudal-fin rays 14**, infrequently 13 or 16. **Longitudinal scale rows 120 to 135.** **ID pattern usually 1-2-2.** **Total vertebrae 57 to 60**, usually 58 or 59. **Hypurals usually 5.** **Colour:** ocular surface uniformly straw-coloured to dark brown, sometimes with overlying pattern of ill-defined dark brown cloudy areas, but otherwise without distinctive markings. Abdominal area immediately posterior to opercular opening sometimes darker than general body colour. **Blind side off-white, without pepper-dots;** usually with median line of internal, black spots showing through skin along axis of vertebral column. Smaller specimens with single longitudinal series of dark internal spots on blind side of body at proximal ends of dorsal- and anal-fin pterygiophores. **Peritoneum black.** **Dorsal and anal fins uniformly light brown without obvious pigmented blotches or spots.** Proximal 1/3 of caudal fin with similar pigment to that on body; distal portion of caudal-fin rays usually unpigmented.

**Size:** Maximum about 87 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Rarely collected; captured on soft mud bottoms on outer continental shelf and upper continental slope at 239 to 810 m; mostly between 400 and 600 m. Females mature at ca. 60 to 65 mm standard length. Of no interest to fisheries.

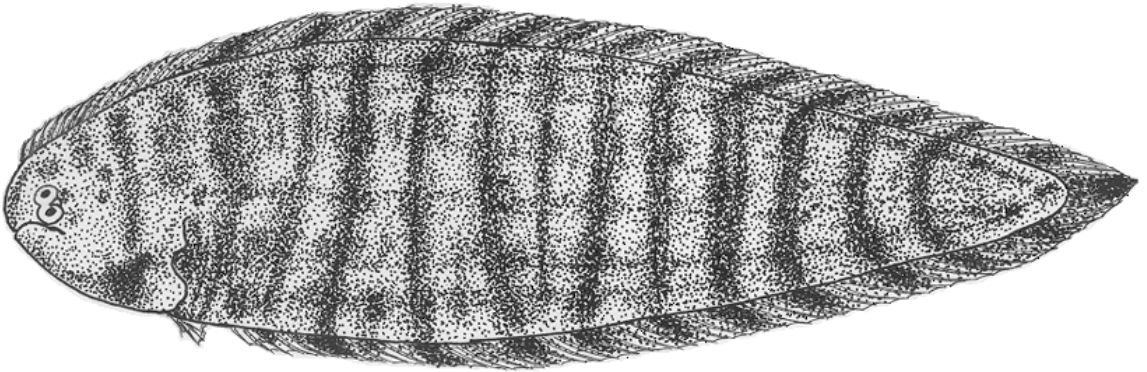
**Distribution:** Western North Atlantic; from Long Island, New York (40°48'N) to Blake Plateau off Fort Lauderdale, Florida (26°28'N).



*Symphurus oculellus* Munroe, 1991

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / *Symphurus tessellatus* (Quoy and Gaimard, 1824).

**FAO Names:** En - Caribbean smallleymed tonguefish.

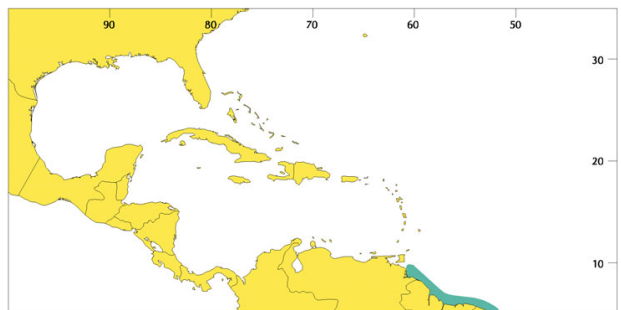


**Diagnostic characters:** Body relatively elongate; greatest depth between verticals through anal-fin rays 10 to 15 posteriorly to midpoint of body; body tapering gradually posterior to midpoint. Head wide; head length shorter than head width. Snout moderately long, slightly rounded or truncate. **Lower eye small** (68 to 104 thousandths of head length); eyes slightly subequal in position. Anterior and medial surfaces of eyes not covered with scales. **Pupillary operculum absent. Maxilla usually reaching posteriorly to point between verticals through posterior margin of pupil and vertical slightly posterior to posterior margin of lower eye. Ocular-side lower jaw with distinct, fleshy ridge near posterior margin.** Ocular-side premaxillary margin either lacking teeth, or with very short row of teeth along no more than 1/3 of premaxilla anterior to vertical through base of anterior nostril. **Dorsal-fin rays 97 to 106. Dorsal-fin origin usually at, or occasionally slightly anterior to, vertical through anterior margin of upper eye. Anal-fin rays 81 to 89. Scales absent from distal 2/3 of blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays, occasionally with 1 or 2 scales occurring sporadically on blind sides of some dorsal- and anal-fin ray bases. Caudal-fin rays 12. Longitudinal scale rows 84 to 97. ID pattern usually 1-4-3. Total vertebrae 52 to 55, usually 53 or 54. Colour: ocular surface dark to light brown with 10 to 14 (usually 10 to 12) well-developed, sharply contrasting, somewhat narrow dark brown crossbands on head and trunk. Peritoneum unpigmented. Outer surface of ocular-side opercle with dark melanophores in diffuse pattern or with melanophores sometimes coalesced into somewhat rounded pigment spot. Inner lining of opercle and isthmus more heavily pigmented on ocular surface. Dorsal, anal, and caudal fins with alternating series of blotches and unpigmented areas. Posterior portions of fins becoming gradually darker; blotches, although still present, much more difficult to discern. Distal 2/3 of caudal fin heavily pigmented; proximal 1/3 relatively lightly pigmented. Small cluster of rays (usually 2-4) in middle of caudal fin more lightly pigmented giving appearance of alternating darkly and lightly pigmented areas.**

**Size:** Maximum about 190 mm standard length, commonly 130 to 160 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** On mud sediments at moderate depths (7 to 110 m) on the continental shelf. Does not appear to utilize nearshore habitats or estuarine environments as nursery areas. Most specimens collected between 11 and 70 m. Few specimens taken deeper than 70 m. No obvious sexual dimorphism in overall size. Females mature at about 110 mm standard length. Of minor commercial importance as bycatch primarily in shrimp fisheries.

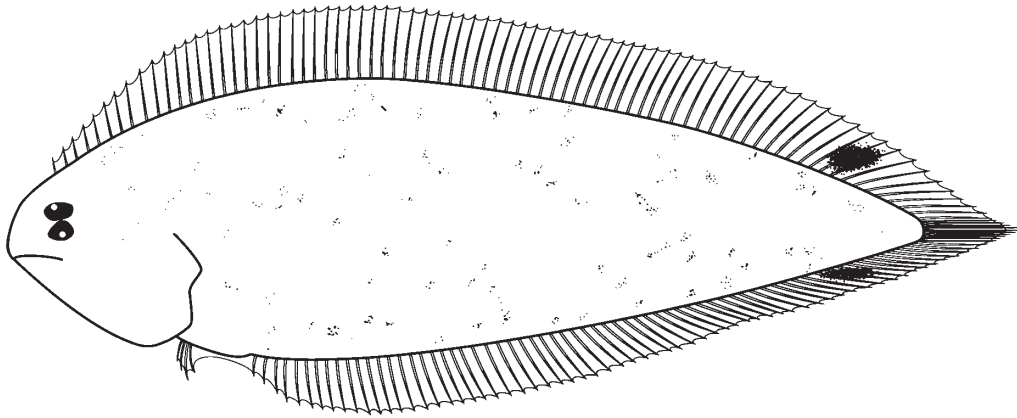
**Distribution:** A tropical species with a restricted distribution along the inner continental shelf of northeastern South America from Guyana (57°W) to northeastern Brazil (2°20'S, 40°W. Unknown whether *S. oculellus* occurs more frequently in areas immediately south of the Amazon outflow.



***Symphurus ommaspilus* Böhlke, 1961**

**Frequent synonyms / misidentifications:** None / None.

**FAO names:** En - Ocellated tonguefish.



**Diagnostic characters:** Body moderately deep; maximum depth in anterior 1/3 of body; tapering gradually beyond body midpoint. Head relatively long and wide; head length shorter than head width. Snout long and pointed. **Lower eye relatively large;** eyes usually equal in position. Anterior and medial surfaces of eyes usually scaleless. **Pupillary operculum well developed.** Maxilla extending posteriorly to point between verticals through midpoint and anterior margin of lower eye. **Ocular-side lower jaw without fleshy ridge. Dorsal-fin rays 75 to 79.** Dorsal-fin origin usually at point between verticals through anterior and posterior margins of pupil of upper eye. **Anal-fin rays 60 to 64. Basal region of dorsal-fin membrane from about seventh dorsal-fin ray and backwards, and anal-fin membrane throughout entire length of fin, with series of openings (membrane ostia) between fin rays. Scales absent on blind sides of dorsal- and anal-fin rays. Caudal-fin rays 10. Longitudinal scale rows 58 to 64. ID pattern 1-4-2. Total vertebrae 43 or 44. Colour: ocular surface whitish with numerous, indistinct, irregularly-shaped, darker brown chromatophores sprinkled over entire surface.** Occasionally with 1, or unusually, 2, incomplete, and rather faint crossbands situated at or slightly posterior to body midpoint. **Blind side off-white or yellowish, without pepper-dots. Peritoneum unpigmented. Dorsal and anal fins with single, large, distinctly ocellated spot on fin in posterior 1/5 of body (approximately 10 to 14 fin rays anterior to posterior extent of each fin).**

**Size:** Maximum about 57 mm, commonly 25 to 40 mm standard length.

**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Inhabits sandy sediments, including those in areas with submerged aquatic vegetation, in clear shallow waters (1 to 27 m) adjacent to coral reefs. The majority of collections have occurred shallower than 15 m. Captured infrequently and generally in small numbers. Most captures are of solitary fish. Females somewhat larger (to ca. 57 mm standard length) than males (ca. 43 mm standard length). Females mature as small as 28 mm standard length. Little is known of the biology of this species. No commercial interest.

**Distribution:** Widespread through insular regions of the Caribbean Sea, including the Bahamas, Glover's Reef, Belize, St. James in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, St. Eustatius, St. Barthelemy, Curaçao, and the French West Indies. The species has rarely been captured at reef areas along the continental margin of the Caribbean. Not reported from the Florida Keys.

