The Elusive Ethereal Snailfish:

A New Liparid Lineage Finally Revealed in the Atacama Trench

Osvaldo Ulloa et al.

Previous video-only observations have documented an apparent new hadal snailfish, tentatively referred to as the “ethereal” snailfish. Based on its distinctive morphology and swimming behaviour, it has also been suggested that it may represent a new genus. During the JCATE Expedition (Joint China–Chile Atacama Trench Expedition) in early 2026, several snailfish individuals were filmed and collected with the aid of the crewed submersible HOV *Fendouzhe*. Preliminary morphological and molecular analyses indicate that some of the collected specimens belong to a distinct hadal liparid lineage consistent with the proposed new genus, whereas others are closely related to *Paraliparis selti*. Phylogenetic analyses further suggest that this putative genus is more closely related to hadal snailfishes from the western Pacific than to *P. selti*, which belongs to a separate evolutionary radiation. These results provide the first specimen-based confirmation of the previously video-only observations of the “ethereal” snailfish and point to a more complex evolutionary history of hadal liparids worldwide.