The blobfish *Psychrolutes marcidus* (McCulloch, 1926), among the strangest fish in the world

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Introduction. The blobfish *Psychrolutes marcidus* (McCulloch, 1926) is a deep-sea fish that has gained fame for its distinctive appearance. It is primarily found in the deep waters off the coasts of mainland Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. The blobfish belongs to the family Psychrolutidae and is known for its gelatinous, blob-like appearance. There are some key features and facts about the blobfish.

Appearance. The blobfish has a soft, gelatinous body that lacks muscle mass. Its flesh is primarily a gelatinous substance that allows it to float in the water (Weis 2011). The fish appears quite different in its natural deep-sea habitat compared to when it is brought to the surface (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Artist's representation of two blobfish in situ. Source: wikipedia.org (artist: Rachel Caauwe, CC BY-SA 3.0).

Adaptation to deep-sea environment. Blobfish live at depths of 600 to 1,200 meters (2,000 to 3,900 feet) where the pressure is extremely high (Diana & Höök 2023). Their unique physical structure is adapted to these deep-sea conditions (Weis 2011).

Habitat. The blobfish is typically found in the deep waters of the ocean, where the pressure is several times higher than at the sea surface. Due to the extreme conditions, it has evolved to have a body that is less dense than water, allowing it to float effortlessly (Weis 2021).

Diet. The diet of the blobfish consists mainly of edible matter that drifts down from the surface, such as small crustaceans and other organic particles.

Conservation status. The blobfish is not currently listed as an endangered species. However, it faces potential threats from deep-sea trawling, a fishing method that can have detrimental effects on deep-sea ecosystems.

Human interaction. While blobfish are not targeted by fisheries, they can sometimes be caught unintentionally as bycatch (Keating 2016). Because of their unique appearance, blobfish have become somewhat of an internet sensation and are sometimes inaccurately portrayed as a ugliest fish or world's ugliest animal (Keating 2016). It is essential to note that the blobfish looks quite different in its natural habitat than it does when brought to the surface due to the change in pressure.

Conclusions. The blobfish is a fascinating deep-sea creature adapted to survive in extreme underwater environments. Its appearance, often exaggerated for comedic effect in popular media, has contributed to its peculiar reputation.

Conflict of interest. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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