

Article

Chromosomal-Level Assembly of Antarctic Scaly Rockcod, *Trematomus loennbergii* Genome Using Long-Read Sequencing and Chromosome Conformation Capture (Hi-C) Technologies

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Abstract: *Trematomus* species (suborder Notothenioidei; family Nototheniidae) are widely distributed in the southern oceans near Antarctica. There are 11 recognized species in the genus *Trematomus*, and notothenioids are known to have high chromosomal diversity ($2n = 24\text{--}58$) because of relatively recent and rapid adaptive radiation. Herein, we report the chromosomal-level genome assembly of *T. loennbergii*, the first characterized genome representative of the genus *Trematomus*. The final genome assembly of *T. loennbergii* was obtained using a Pacific Biosciences long-read sequencing platform and high-throughput chromosome conformation capture technology. Twenty-three chromosomal-level scaffolds were assembled to 940 Mb in total size, with a longest contig size of 48.5 Mb and contig N50 length of 24.7 Mb. The genome contained 42.03% repeat sequences, and a total of 24,525 protein-coding genes were annotated. We produced a high-quality genome assembly of *T. loennbergii*. Our results provide a first reference genome for the genus *Trematomus* and will serve as a basis for studying the molecular taxonomy and evolution of Antarctic fish.

Keywords: Antarctic fish; notothenioids; long-read sequencing; Hi-C; chromosomal-level assembly

1. Introduction

Genus *Trematomus* belongs to the suborder Notothenioidei, the dominant fish fauna distributed in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica. Notothenioids are adapted to low temperatures to protect them from cold stress, and they have been found to contain antifreeze glycoproteins (AFGPs) and lack a heat-shock response (HSR) [1–4]. Additionally, some notothenioid species lost myoglobin and/or hemoglobin during adaptation to cold water [1,5,6]. There are 11 recognized species in the genus *Trematomus* [7], however, some species are deemed to be taxonomically problematic. Particularly, *T. lepidorhinus* and *T. loennbergii* have similar morphology and are mainly distinguished by scales on the snout, lower jaw, and preorbital (scaled vs. naked), and the snout length ratio (nearly as long as the eye diameter vs. much shorter) [8–10]. Moreover, they cannot be discriminated by any molecular markers including mitochondrial or nuclear markers, thus the necessity of distinctive nuclear markers and morphological reconsideration has been suggested [10–13]. On the other hand, trematomids have undergone relatively recent and rapid adaptive radiation, resulting in high chromosomal diversity ($2n = 24\text{--}58$) among

notothenioids [14–17]. In the case of *T. lepidorhinus*, the diploid chromosome number is 47 in males and 48 in females [14,18], while *T. loennbergii* has diploid numbers ranging between 26 and 33 without sex-related differences [14,19,20]. This implies that karyotype comparison might be a useful tool for species discrimination, although both have 52 chromosomal arms [10,14].

In this study, we assembled the chromosomal-level genome of *T. loennbergii* using a Pacific Biosciences (PacBio) platform and high-throughput chromosome conformation capture (Hi-C) strategy. PacBio sequencing, also called single molecule real-time (SMRT) sequencing, is a long-read sequencing approach that has been widely used for de novo assembly [21]. The use of long reads provides significant advantages over short read-based sequencing for genome assembly, enabling high-quality genome assembly even in the presence of repetitive or low-complexity DNA regions [21]. Hi-C is a chromosome conformation capture (3C)-based technology that generates chromatin proximity information between all regions of the genome, and this spatial information can be used to assemble contigs and scaffolds as a chromosome-level [22–24]. These days, many projects have attempted the scaffolding strategy that combines long-read sequencing with Hi-C [21]. To date, the mitochondrial genomes of two species, *T. bernacchii* [25] and *T. pennellii* [26], have been described, and genome survey data of *T. loennbergii* have recently been published [27], but the chromosomal-level genome assemblies of *Trematomus* species have not yet been reported. This study provides a first reference genome for the genus *Trematomus* and will serve as a basic resource for studying the taxonomy and evolution of Antarctic fish.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample Collection and DNA Extraction

The *T. loennbergii* sample was collected from Ross Sea, Antarctica (SCAR Subarea 88.1), and transported to the laboratory while frozen. High molecular-weight genomic DNA was extracted from the muscle tissues of the frozen specimen using a phenol/chloroform method for long-read sequencing on a PacBio Sequel platform (Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA, USA). The quality and quantity of DNA were checked with a Fragment Analyzer (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) and Qubit 2.0 fluorometer (Invitrogen, Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA, USA).

2.2. Genome Sequencing and Assembly Using PacBio Long Reads

The DNA was purified by AMPure[®] PB beads (Pacific Biosciences, CA, USA) before library preparation. The SMRTbell library and SMRTbell-polymerase complex were constructed using a SMRTbell template prep kit 1.0 and a Sequel binding kit 3.0 according to the manufacturer's protocol (Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA, USA) (Table S1). The complex was loaded onto the Sequel instrument with SMRT cells 1M v3 and Sequel sequencing kit 3.0 (Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA, USA). We produced 6,258,640 subreads with a total read length of 77,938,427,833 bp using four SMRT cells (Table S2). The FALCON-Unzip assembler (ver. 0.4, Falcon, RRID:SCR_016089) was used for de novo assembly [28] with the options `length_cutoff = 12,000` and `length_cutoff_pr = 10,000`. We polished initial genome assembly in order to improve its accuracy with Pilon v1.22 (Pilon, RRID:SCR_014731) [29] using BAM files produced by Bowtie v2.3.4.1 [30] with the short-read assembly dataset, and we used Purge Haplotigs [31] to find and remove haplotigs from the assemblies. The contiguity of assemblies was evaluated with an N50 value, which is defined as the shortest contig/scaffold length that accounts for half of the total genome length.

2.3. Hi-C Analysis and Chromosome Assembly

The frozen muscle tissue from the same individual utilized for DNA extraction was also used for Hi-C library construction. Briefly, nuclear chromatin was fixed in the fish muscle tissue with formaldehyde and then extracted. Fixed chromatin was digested with DpnII, and sticky ends were filled in with biotinylated nucleotides and ligated. Next, crosslinks were reversed, and the resulted hybrid DNA strands were purified from present

free biotinylated nucleotides. Biotinylated linear DNA fragments were then sheared to size of ~350 bp and pulled down by streptavidin beads to obtain enriched sample for genuine interactions. To generate the library, paired-end adaptors were ligated to the resulted linear DNA fragments and PCR amplified [32]. Insert size and concentration were checked, and the final libraries were sequenced on the Illumina Novaseq platform (San Diego, CA, USA) with 150-bp paired-end reads. A total of 208 million Hi-C reads were generated (Table S2) and these were used as input data for HiRise, a software pipeline designed specifically for using proximity ligation data to scaffold genome assemblies [33] with the default settings to map to the polished scaffolds. Dovetail Hi-C library sequences were aligned to the draft input assembly using a modified SNAP read mapper (<http://snap.cs.berkeley.edu>, accessed on 30 April 2021). The separations of Hi-C read pairs mapped within draft scaffolds were analyzed by HiRise to produce a likelihood model for genomic distance between read pairs and generate the Hi-C contact map. The model was used to identify and discard putative mis-joins, score prospective joins, and make joins above thresholds, meaning that scaffolds anchored to single chromosome were considered as accurate joins. The syntenic relationship between assembled genome (scaffolds > 9 Mb) of *T. loennbergii* and *Gasterosteus aculeatus* genome were analyzed and visualized by SyMAP v3.4 [34] and Circos [35] with the default parameters.

2.4. Quality Evaluation

After HiRise pipeline, the completeness of the *T. loennbergii* genome assembly was evaluated using BUSCO version 4.0 (BUSCO, RRID:SCR_015008) in genome assessment mode [36] with the *actinopterygii_odb10* dataset.

2.5. Transcriptome Sequencing

Total RNA was extracted from skin and muscle samples that were used for DNA extraction using a RNeasy Plus Mini kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany), according to the manufacturer's protocol. The quality and quantity of RNA were measured with a 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) and Qubit 2.0 fluorometer (Invitrogen, Life Technologies, CA, USA). Complementary DNA (cDNA) for Iso-seq libraries was synthesized using a SMARTer PCR cDNA synthesis kit (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA, USA). Iso-seq SMRTbell libraries for the Sequel system (Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA, USA) were prepared following the manufacturer's protocol. Iso-seq libraries were sequenced using a total of two SMRT cells 1M v3 LR with Sequel sequencing chemistry 3.0 to generate 1,211,859 subreads with a total read length 63,927,996,589 bp (Table S2). Iso-seq data analysis was conducted through Iso-seq3 application in SMRT Link (ver. 6.0.0) with default settings.

2.6. Genome Annotation and Repeat Analysis

A de novo library of repeat sequences was constructed based on the Purge Haplotigs-processed genome using RepeatModeler ver. 1.0.3 (RRID:SCR_015027) [37] consisting of RECON ver. 1.08 [37] and RepeatScout ver. 1.0.5 (RRID:SCR_014653) [38]. Tandem Repeats Finder ver. 4.09 [39] was used to predict consensus sequences and classify information for each repeat and tandem repeat, including simple repeats, satellites, and low-complexity repeats. RepeatMasker ver. 4.0.9 (<http://repeatmasker.org>, accessed on 30 April 2021) was used to mask interspersed repeats and low complexity DNA sequences, and calculate Kimura distance-based copy divergence for each types of repeat motifs with the default settings.

For genome annotation, we used MAKER ver. 2.28 (MAKER, RRID:SCR_005309) [40]. Ab initio gene prediction was performed using SNAP (SNAP, RRID:SCR_002127) and Augustus (Augustus: Gene Prediction, RRID:SCR_008417). MAKER was initially run in *est2genome* mode based on *T. loennbergii* transcriptome sequencing data from Iso-seq and Purge Haplotigs-processed genome data. In addition, protein sequences from 14 species genomes (*Amphiprion ocellaris*, *Astyanax mexicanus*, *Chaenocephalus aceratus*, *Danio rerio*,

Dicentrarchus labrax, *Gadus morhua*, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*, *Notothenia coriiceps*, *Oreochromis niloticus*, *Oryzias latipes*, *Poecilia formosa*, *Takifugu rubripes*, *Tetraodon nigroviridis*, and *Xiphophorus maculatus*) were downloaded from the NCBI GenBank database and used for running protein2genome mode as references for homology-based gene prediction.

2.7. Functional Annotation

Functional annotations were accomplished by aligning protein fasta sequences from Maker annotation to the NCBI non-redundant protein (nr) [41], SwissProt (Swissprot, RRID:SCR_002380) [42], Translation of European Molecular Biology Laboratory (TrEMBL, RRID:SCR_002380) [42], Eukaryotic Orthologous Groups (KOG) [43], and Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG, RRID:SCR_001120) [44] databases using BLASTP v2.2.31 [45] with a maximal e-value of 10^{-10} and to the Pfam database (Pfam, RRID:SCR_004726) [46] using HMMer V3.0 [47]. Protein signatures from resulted transcriptome data were annotated using the InterProScan 5 (InterProScan, RRID:SCR_005829) [48] pipeline for further gene ontology (GO) analysis, with respect to biological process, molecular function, and cellular component categories, implemented in Blast2GO (ver. 4.1.9) [49].

Other non-coding RNAs, such as miRNAs, rRNAs, and tRNAs, were predicted using Infernal software package ver. 1.1 (Infernal, RRID:SCR_011809) [50] and the Rfam (Rfam, RRID:SCR_007891) [51] database. Putative tRNAs were identified by tRNAscan-SE ver. 1.4 (tRNAscan-SE, RRID:SCR_010835) [52].

2.8. Gene Family Identification and Phylogenetic Analysis

The Orthologous gene families were clustered for 20 teleost fishes based on their transcripts protein sequences similarity using OrthoFinder 2 [53] with default parameters (Table S5). The maximum-likelihood (ML) tree of 20 teleost species was constructed using one to one single-copy orthologs via MEGA X software [54] with 1000 bootstraps. TimeTree [55] (median estimates of the pairwise divergence time for *D. rerio* and *G. morhua*: 230.4 Ma) was used to calibrate the divergence times using MCMC algorithms implemented in PAML packages [56]. The gene gain and loss was analyzed using CAFÉ ver. 4.0 [57] with $p < 0.05$.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Genome Assembly

The genome assembly of the Antarctic scaly rockcod, *T. loennbergii*, has been generated using long-read SMRT sequencing from PacBio and the Hi-C scaffolding strategy. After Hi-C super-scaffolding, a genome of approximately 940 Mb was obtained, of which the longest contig was 48.5 Mb, and the length of N50 was 24.7 Mb (Table 1). The number of scaffolds in the assembled genome was 1132, and 23 scaffolds were above 9 Mb in length (Table 1 and Table S4, Figure 1A). The number of the longest scaffolds ($n = 23$) is larger than the number of chromosomes previously known in *T. loennbergii* ($2n = 26-33$) [14,19,20], so further studies that can encompass the genomic and cytogenetic data are needed.

Table 1. Statistics for *Trematomus loennbergii* genome assembly.

Assembly	Contigs	Scaffolds
Number	1482	1132
Total size of assembly (bp)	944,447,341	944,482,341
Longest contig (bp)	17,998,618	48,466,630
N50 contigs length (bp)	1,726,674	24,660,741
Number of scaffolds > 9 Mb	4	23

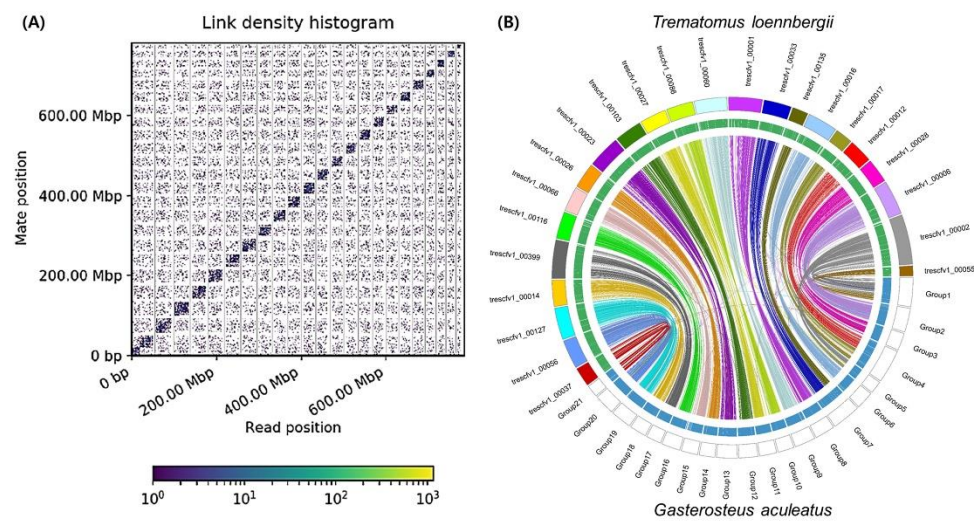


Figure 1. (A) Hi-C interaction heat map for *Trematomus loennbergii*. (B) Collinear relationship between *T. loennbergii* and *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. Alignment was accomplished with SyMAP v3.4. The colored blocks represent *T. loennbergii* scaffolds, and the white boxes represent *G. aculeatus* chromosomes. Blue and green bars represent genes of *G. aculeatus* and *T. loennbergii*, respectively. Connections within the circle represent alignment between the two assemblies.

The Benchmarking Universal Single-Copy Orthologs (BUSCO) v4.0 was used along with the actinopterygii odb10 database to assess the completeness of the *T. loennbergii* genome assembly. Among 3640 expected actinopterygii genes, 3291 (90.4%) and 96 (2.6%) genes were completely and partially identified, respectively. Among the complete actinopterygii genes, 3222 (88.5%) and 69 (1.9%) were identified as single-copy and duplicated BUSCOs, respectively (Table 2).

The syntenic relationship of *T. loennbergii* and *Gasterosteus aculeatus* genomes was compared by SyMAP v3.4 [34], which showed a high level of synteny conservation that generally corresponded to one-to-one (Figure 1B). All of these results indicate that we obtained highly contiguous and complete genome assemblies of *T. loennbergii*.

Table 2. Completeness of the *Trematomus loennbergii* genome assembly evaluated with Benchmarking Universal Single-Copy Orthologs (BUSCO).

Actinopterygii_odb10	Number	Percentage (%)
Complete BUSCOs (C)	3291	90.4
Complete and single-copy BUSCOs (S)	3222	88.5
Complete and duplicated BUSCOs (D)	69	1.9
Fragmented BUSCOs (F)	96	2.6
Missing BUSCOs (M)	253	7.0
Total BUSCO groups searched	3640	-

3.2. Genome Annotation

We analyzed the repetitive sequences in the *T. loennbergii* genome including those in the tandem repeats and transposable elements (TEs). The genome of *T. loennbergii* contains 42.03% repeated sequences, and 38.64% account for TEs (Table S4). Among these, 15.84% are DNA transposons, 2.97% are long terminal repeats (LTRs), 5.66% are long interspersed elements (LINEs), and 0.54% are short interspersed elements (SINEs) (Table S5). Kimura distances [58] were calculated for all TE copies from the genome library to estimate the age of TEs, which shows the more recent TE insertions (Kimura divergence K-values ≤ 5) that are strongly shaped by DNA transposons in a repeated landscape (Figure 2).

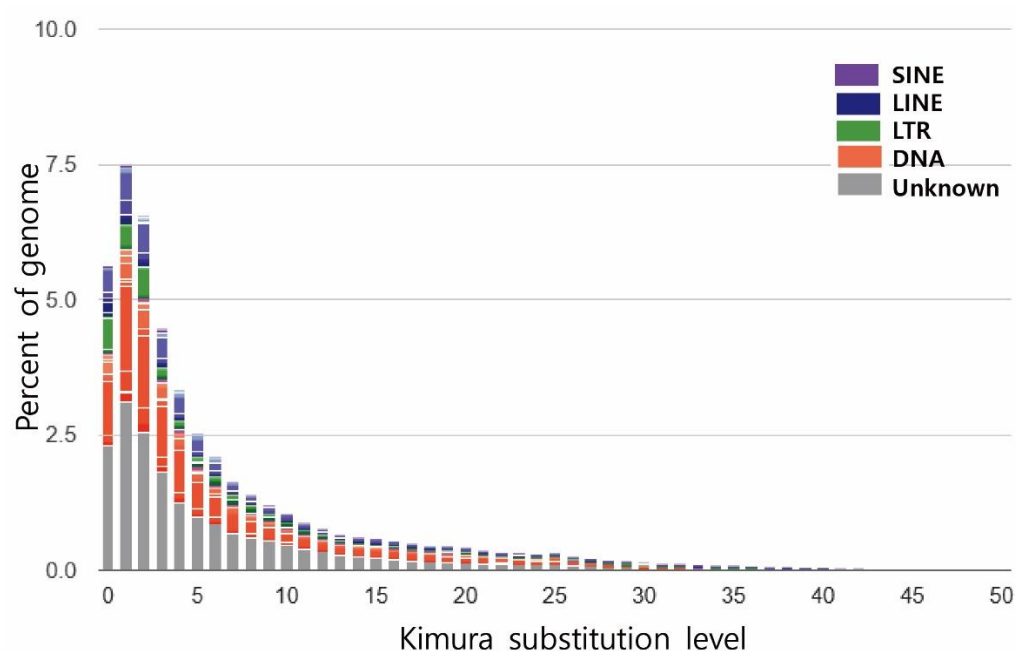


Figure 2. Kimura distance-based copy divergence analysis of transposable elements. Graphs represent genome coverage (y -axis) for each type of TE (DNA transposons, SINE, LINE, and LTR retrotransposons) in the *Trematomus loennbergii* genome.

A total of 24,525 protein-coding genes in the *T. loennbergii* genome were annotated using combination of ab initio gene prediction, homology search, and transcript mapping. The total length of exons was 62 Mb, with 11.3 exons per gene on average (Table 3). For the consequence of the functional annotation, a total of 24,480 (99.8%) genes were annotated in at least one database (Table 3). The genes annotated in the GO and KOG databases were 19,389 (79.1%) and 15,801 (64.4%), respectively (Table 3), and the functional classifications are shown in Figure 3.

Table 3. *Trematomus loennbergii* genome annotation statistics.

Annotation Database	Annotated Number	Percentage (%)
No. Genes	24,525	-
nr Annotation	23,016	93.8
GO Annotation	19,389	79.1
KEGG Annotation	11,546	47.1
KOG Annotation	15,801	64.4
Pfam Annotation	17,313	70.6
Swissprot Annotation	19,809	80.8
TrEMBL Annotation	22,932	93.5
-	Count	Length Sum (bp)
Exon	329,468	62,037,587
CDS	311,918	48,174,219

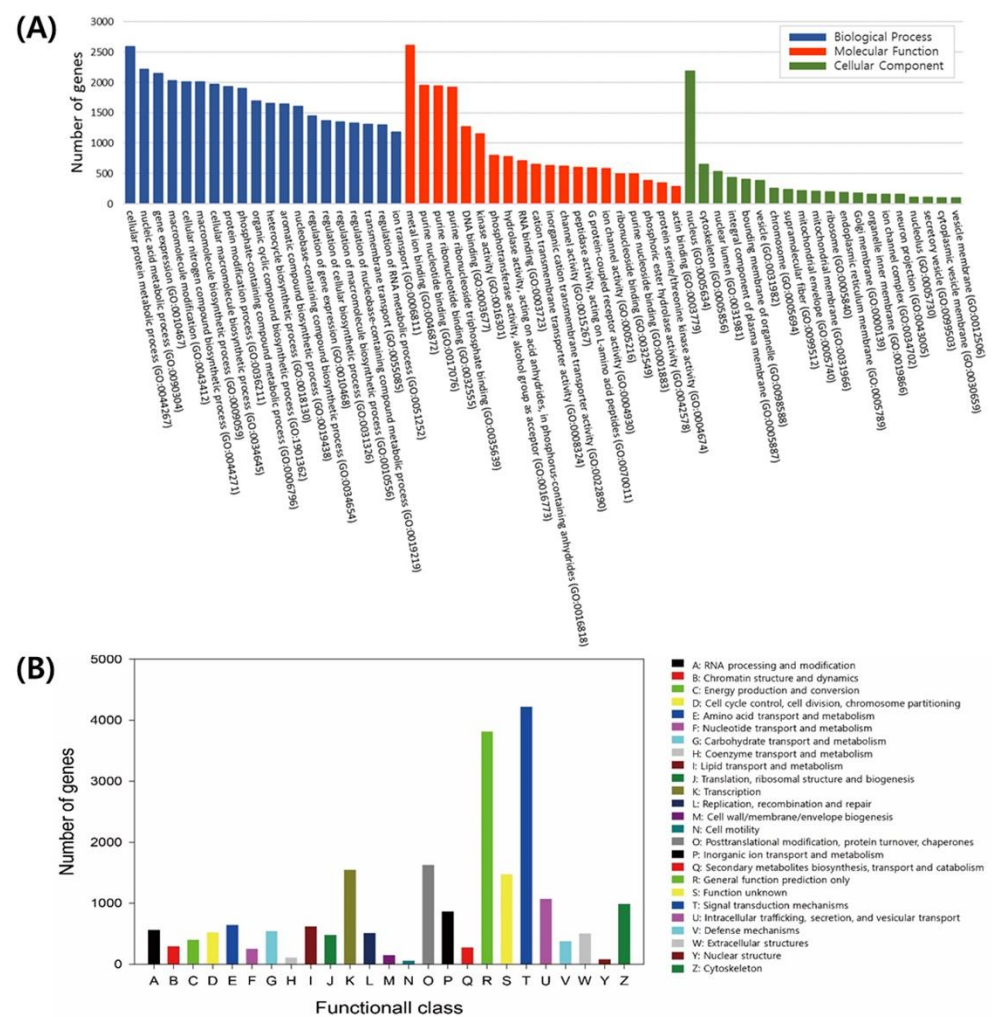


Figure 3. (A) Gene ontology (GO) annotations for the predicted genes within the *Trematopus loennbergii* genome. The horizontal axis indicates the classes of the 5-level GO-annotation, and the vertical level axis indicates the number of genes in each class. (B) Eukaryotic Orthologous Groups (KOG) classification of the predicted genes within the *T. loennbergii* genome. Results are grouped into 25 functional classes according to their functions. The horizontal axis indicates each class, and the vertical level axis indicates the number of genes in each class.

3.3. Gene Family Identification and Phylogenetic Analysis

In total, 7160 orthologue gene families were identified in all examined species of which 895 are species specific for *T. loennbergii* (Figure 4A and Table S6). A vast majority of the expanded gene ontology in the biological processes belong to regulation of metabolic process (negative regulation of macromolecule metabolic process, GO:0010605; negative regulation of nitrogen compound metabolic process, GO:0051172; negative regulation of cellular metabolic process, GO:0031324; regulation of macromolecule metabolic process, GO:0060255; regulation of nitrogen compound metabolic process, GO:0051171; regulation of primary metabolic process, GO:0080090), ion transmembrane transport (inorganic ion transmembrane transport, GO:0098660; cation transmembrane transport, GO:0098655; inorganic anion transmembrane transport, GO:0098661) and detection of stimulus (detection of chemical stimulus, GO:0009593; detection of stimulus involved in sensory perception, GO:0050906) (Tables S7 and S8). Among those, the GO terms associated with the macromolecule metabolic process have also been enriched in relation to cold adaptation or cold tolerance in several studies [59–61], suggesting further investigation on these expanded gene families.

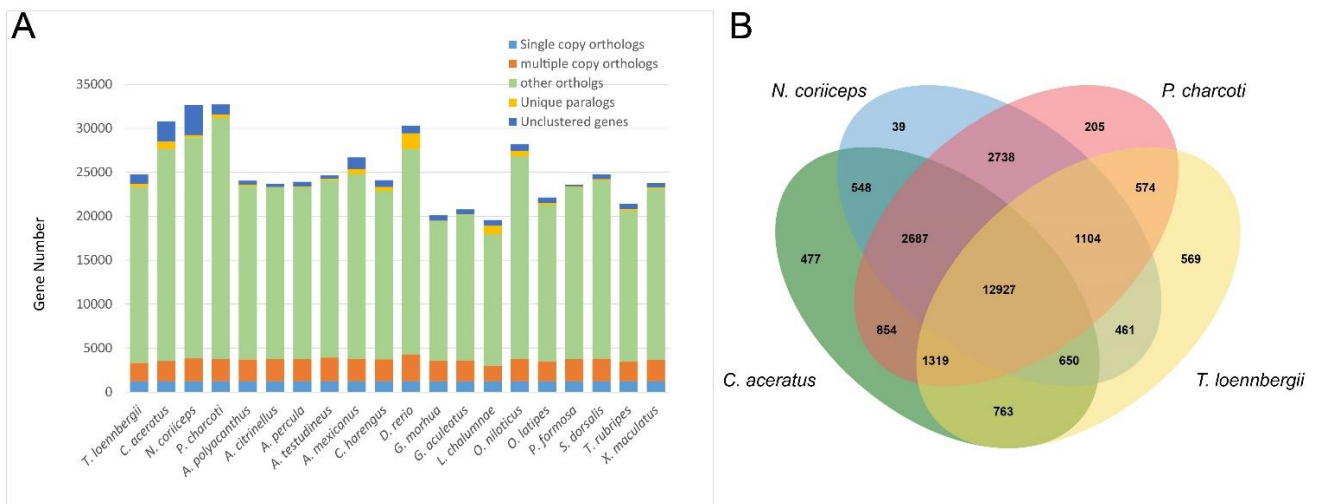


Figure 4. Gene family comparison. (A) Orthologous gene families between *Trematomus loennbergii* and other fish species. (B) Venn diagram of orthologous gene families between *T. loennbergii* and other three Antarctic fish species.

Among Antarctic fish clade (*T. loennbergii*, *Notothenia coriiceps*, *Chaenocephalus aceratus*, and *Parachaenichthys charcoti*), we identified that 12,927 gene families were shared in four species, and 569 gene families were unique to *T. loennbergii* (Figure 4B). The four Antarctic fish assigned to the order Perciformes formed a monophyletic clade, and TimeTree [55] calibrated divergence time between *T. loennbergii* and other 3 Antarctic fish lineage was approximately 31.5 million years ago (Figure 5). Analysis of gene family gain and loss using CAFÉ ver. 4.0 [57] showed that *T. loennbergii* genome characterizes by expansion of 737 and contraction of 227 gene families in relation to remaining teleosts included to analysis (Figure 5). The expanded and contracted gene families in the *T. loennbergii* against other Antarctic teleosts were involved in broad range of gene functions, which are worthy of further study as they would be associated with *T. loennbergii*-specific physiological properties (Table S9).

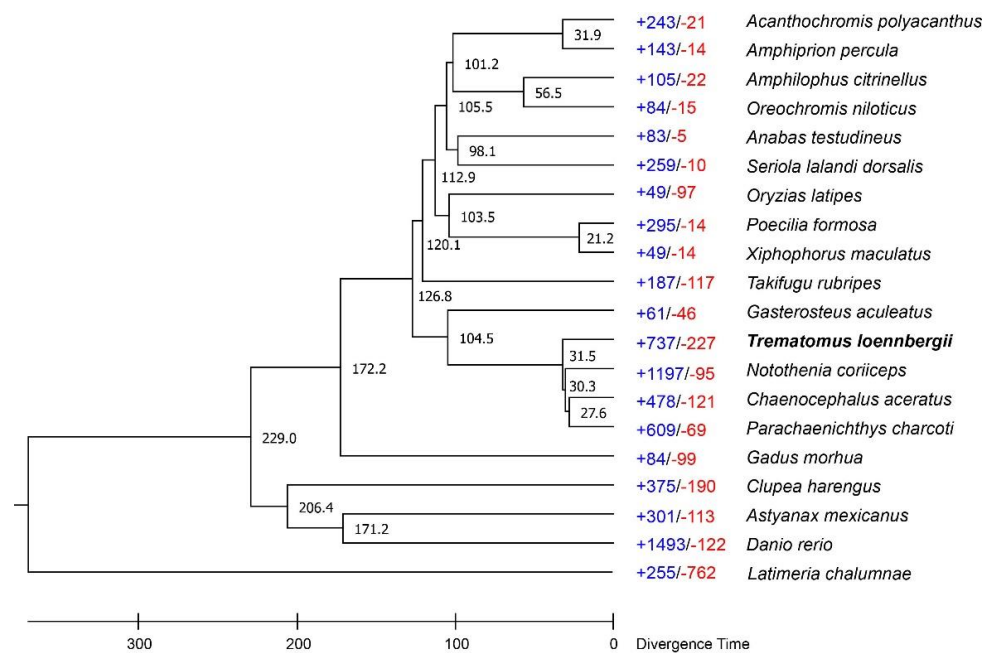


Figure 5. Phylogenetic analysis of *Trematomus loennbergii* within the teleost lineage and gene family gain-and-loss analysis, including the number of gained (+) and lost single-copy orthologous gene families (−). Each number of branch site indicates divergence times between lineages.

4. Conclusions

Here, we report the chromosomal-level genome assembly of *T. loennbergii*, which was achieved using a third-generation sequencing platform, PacBio Sequel, and Hi-C analysis. The final genome assembly of the *T. loennbergii* is 940 Mb with N50 of 24.7 Mb, and has 294,525 protein-coding genes which were annotated from the newly obtained genome assembly. This retrieved novel genomic data is expected to improve our understanding on the evolutionary history and genome organization of the genus *Trematomus*, as well as providing valuable information for molecular taxonomy and evolutionary studies on Antarctic fish species. The obtained information under the current study genome assembly can be used in the future as reference data for genomic studies on the gene expression, signaling pathway, and biochemical processes characteristics for the Antarctic fishes, such as antifreeze proteins synthesis or evolutionary basis of heat-shock proteins activity loss.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/d13120668/s1>, Table S1: Key protocol for *Trematomus loennbergii* genome sequencing and assembly, Table S2: Sequencing data generated for *Trematomus loennbergii* genome assembly, Table S3: Lengths of *Trematomus loennbergii* genome scaffolds, Table S4: Statistics for annotated *Trematomus loennbergii* transposable elements, Table S5: Species information used in this study, Table S6: Summary of gene families of *Trematomus loennbergii* and other fish species, Table S7: Gene Ontology of expanded genes families in the *Trematomus loennbergii* genome among twenty fishes, Table S8: Gene Ontology of contracted genes families in the *Trematomus loennbergii* genome among twenty fishes, Table S9: Gene Ontology of specific genes families in the *Trematomus loennbergii* genome among four Antarctic fishes.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The procedures adopted in this study were performed in accordance with the guidelines of the Animal Welfare Ethical Committee and the Animal Experimental Ethics Committee of the Korea Polar Research Institute (KOPRI, Incheon, Korea).

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The *Trematomus loennbergii* genome project was deposited at NCBI under BioProject number PRJNA610666. The whole-genome sequence was deposited in the Sequence Read Archive (SRA) database with the accession number SRR11364406 and SRR11364405.

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

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