

Yellowbelly dottyback courtship behaviour

Subjects: Yellowbelly dottyback, *Pseudochromis ransonneti* (Teleostei: Pseudochromidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor & Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Straits, off Pulau Hantu; 23 February 2014; around 1118 hrs.

Habitat: Coral reef at depth of about 12 m..

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: Two dottybacks of around 5 cm total length were seen at the entrance of a burrow on the sea bed. The smaller individual was swimming in an exaggerated undulating motion (Fig. 1). The slightly larger one entered the burrow (Fig. 2) but left in about 5 seconds. The ‘dancing’ example stayed on the left side of the burrow for about 10 seconds before swimming away (Fig. 3).

Remarks: *Pseudochromis ransonneti* seems to be the only member of the genus to be recorded from Singapore waters. The apparent courtship behavior in the present observation indicates that it does not differ from that recorded of congeners that have been bred in captivity. The male performs an undulating swimming display to lure the female to a hole, crevice or burrow to spawn. The eggs are produced in a mass that is not fixed to the substrate. After the male fertilizes the eggs, he usually chases the female away from the nest. The eggs are guarded by the male until they hatch in 5 to 6 days. *Pseudochromis* species change sex, usually from female to male, and the males tend to be larger (Michael, 2004: 104-107). However, in the present observation, the apparent female seems to be the larger one. As both fish were not in the burrow at the same time, it is unlikely that spawning had occurred. The female could have found the burrow unsuitable after inspecting it.

Reference: Michael, S. W., 2004. *Reef Fishes Series. Book 2. Basslets, Dottybacks & Hawkfishes*. T.F.H. Publications & Microcosm Ltd., USA. 296 pp.



Fig. 1. Male swimming with undulating motion at entrance of burrow. Photograph by Heng Pei Yan



Fig. 2. Larger fish, apparently a female, in the burrow, possibly for an inspection.



Fig. 3. Smaller fish stopped 'dancing' and stayed momentarily on the left of the burrow's entrance after the larger one left the scene.

Photographs by Heng Pei Yan

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