

New record of mimic octopus in Singapore

Subject: Mimic octopus, *Thaumoctopus mimicus* (Mollusca: Cephalopoda: Octopoda: Octopodidae).

Subject identified by: Zeehan Jaafar & Mark D. Norman.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait, west of Pulau Hantu; 30 November 2014; around 0945 hrs.

Habitat: Marine, on open patch of soft sand, at about 11 m depth.

Observers: Carsten V. Steffensen & Diah Anggraini Saraswati.

Observation: An individual was spotted on the seabed at the entrance of a burrow with its head between 7 and 10 cm above the sand. The head (Fig. 1 & 2) and one of its arms (Fig. 3) were photographed before the octopus withdrew completely into the burrow, probably disturbed by the camera flashes. After a few seconds, the entrance of the burrow crumbled.

Remarks: The distinctively marked mimic octopus is famous for its mimicry of other toxic marine creatures such as lionfish and banded sea snakes. It not only matches these in forms and colour pattern, it also adopts the postures and movements similar to those of its models (see Norman, 2000, as *Octopus* sp. 19). This species has a wide distribution in the Indo-west Pacific. It is known from shallow waters of the Red Sea, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, tropical Australia, at least to New Caledonia (Norman & Hochberg, 2005). This seems to be the first record from the usually turbid waters around Singapore (see Tan & Woo, 2010).

References:

- Norman, M., 2000. *Cephalopods. A World Guide*. Conch Books, Hackenheim, Germany. 318 pp.
Norman, M. D. & F. G. Hochberg, 2005. The “mimic octopus” (*Thaumoctopus mimicus* n. gen. et sp.), a new octopus from the tropical Indo-west Pacific (Cephalopoda: Octopodidae). *Molluscan Research*. 25 (2): 57-70.
Tan S. K. & H. P. M. Woo, 2010. *A Preliminary Checklist of the Molluscs of Singapore*. Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, National University of Singapore. 78 pp.



Fig. 1. Lateral view of head.



Fig. 2. Frontal view of head.



Fig. 3. One of the arms.

Photographs by Diah Anggraini Saraswati

Contributors: Diah Anggraini **Saraswati**, Carsten V. **Steffensen** & Zeehan **Jaafar**
Contact address: sa_ras@hotmail.com (Saraswati)