

Juvenile spotted scats at West Coast Park

Subjects: Spotted scat, *Scatophagus argus* (Teleostei: Scatophagidae).

Subjects identified by: Tan Heok Hui & Tan Siong Kiat.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, West Coast Park; 17 October 2016; around 1830 hrs.

Habitat: Estuarine. At the mouth of a concretised canal, in pool among rocks and muddy slope during low tide.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: A group of 6 to 8 juveniles was observed swimming against a slight water current in a pool of water. When the water was disturbed, several of the fish lost mobility and floated to the surface, probably from osmotic shock caused by sudden exposure to freshwater collected at the surface of the pool. Some of these juveniles were kept as voucher specimens (ZRC 55452, Fig. 1 & 2) in the Zoological Reference Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore.

Remarks: The spotted scat is a common fish that has been recorded from many coastal locations in Singapore (Lim & Low, 2001; Ng et al., 2015). It can attain 30 cm in standard length and has a wide distribution in the tropical Indo-West Pacific, from the Persian Gulf throughout the East Indies to southern Japan, the Caroline Islands and Australia. The strong sharp spines on the dorsal and anal fins are apparently venomous and capable of inflicting painful wounds (see Allen & Erdmann, 2012). Most juveniles are red dorsally and undergo a tholichthys larval stage with distinct spines on the head (Fig. 1; see Kottelat et al., 1993).

References:

- Allen, G. R. & M. V. Erdmann, 2012. *Reef Fishes of the East Indies. Volume III*. Tropical Reef Research, Perth, Australia. pp. 857-1292.
- Kottelat, M., A. J. Whitten, S. N. Kartikasari & S. Wirjoatmodjo, 1993. *Freshwater Fishes of Western Indonesia and Sulawesi*. Periplus Editions, Hong Kong. 259 pp., 84 pls.
- Lim, K. K. P. & J. K. Y. Low, 2002. *A Guide to Common Marine Fishes of Singapore*. Revised edition. Singapore Science Centre. 163 pp.
- Ng H. H., H. H. Tan, K. K. P. Lim, W. B. Ludt & P. Chakrabarty, 2015. Fishes of the Eastern Johor Straits. *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*. Supplement 31: 303-337.



Fig. 1. Frontal (left) and lateral views of juvenile *Scatophagus argus* (9.7 mm standard length from ZRC 55452) showing lateral spines on the head. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

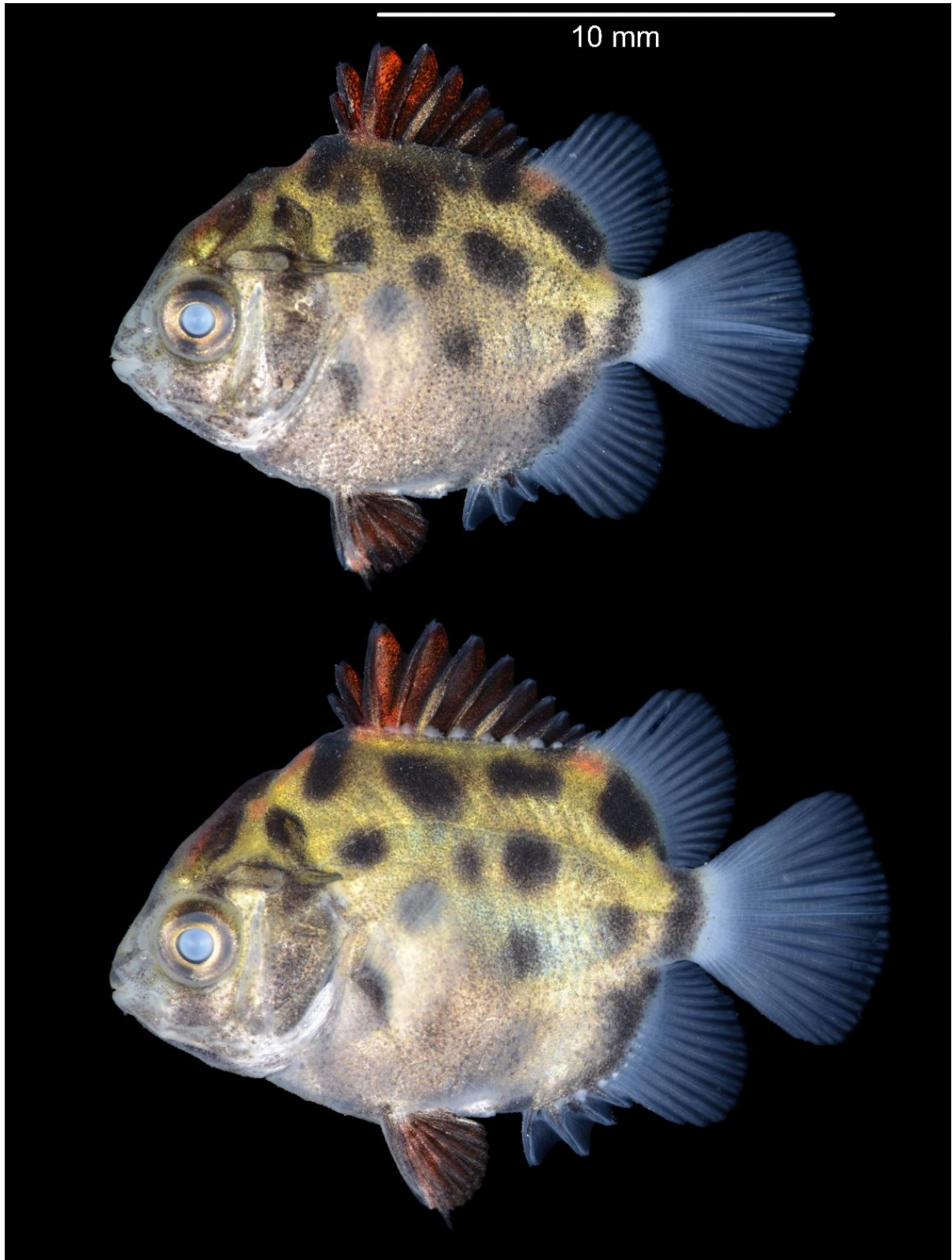


Fig. 2. Lateral views of juvenile *Scatophagus argus* from West Coast Park (ZRC 55452) of 13.1 (top) and 16.0 mm standard length. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

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