

Argus wrasses at Pulau Seringat

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Subject: Argus wrasse, *Halichoeres argus* (Teleostei: Labridae).

Subject identified by: Author.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait, Pulau Seringat east; 30 August 2017; around 1400-1600 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Subtidal seawall of granite boulders, extending to 3-4 m depth, about 500 m from a coral reef.

Observer: Author.

Observation: At least one adult fish of about 8 cm total length (Fig. 1 & 2) and two smaller, greenish-brown, possibly juvenile individuals of about 5 cm (Fig. 3) were observed. They were swimming actively among patches of *Sargassum* on the seawall, at a depth of approximately one metre.

Remarks: The argus wrasse grows to 11 cm total length, and is distributed from the east Andaman Sea throughout Indonesia, to Fiji and northwards to Taiwan. It usually occurs in groups among seagrass and weed-covered reefs near the shore in depths of between 1 and 5 metres. The males are reddish with a light green spot on each scale of the side, intricate pattern of curved pink, red, or orange bands on the head, and often with dark margin on the caudal fin. The females are also brightly coloured with 5 or 6 white spots along the back. (Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 667). The young fish are bright green when in seagrasses and greenish brown on reefs (Kuiter, 2002: 122).



Fig. 1. Lateral view of an adult fish, possibly a male. Photograph by Daisuke Taira

According to Fowler (1938: 192), *Halichoeres argus* was first recorded from Singapore as *PlatyGLOSSUS guttulatus* by Károli (1882: 174). From the author's personal observations, this species does not appear to be common in Singapore waters.

References:

- Allen, G. R. & M. V. Erdmann, 2012. *Reef Fishes of the East Indies. Volume II*. Tropical Reef Research, Perth, Australia. pp. 425-856.
- Fowler, H.W. 1938. A list of the fishes known from Malaya. *Fisheries Bulletin* 1: 1-268.
- Károli, J. 1882. Prodomus piscium Asiae Orientalis a domine Joanne Xanthus annis 1868-70 collectorum. *Természettudományi Füzetek, Budapest*. 5: 147-187.
- Kuiter, R. H., 2002. *Fairy & Rainbow Wrasses and their Relatives. A Comprehensive Guide to Selected Labroids*. English language edition. TMC Publishing, Chorleywood, UK. 208 pp.



Fig. 2. Lateral view of adult argus wrasse with fins extended and head pointing to the right.



Fig. 3. Two possible juvenile argus wrasses, one at upper right, the other at lower left corner of picture.

Photographs by Daisuke Taira