

New record of the masked bannerfish in Singapore

Subject: Masked bannerfish, *Heniochus monoceros* (Teleostei: Chaetodontidae).

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

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait, Sisters Islands Marine Park, southeast of Pulau Subar Laut; 8 May 2017; between 1400 and 1500 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Coral reef, at about 5 m depth, on the reef slope.

Observers: Contributor, with Lutfi Afiq-Rosli, Yuichi Kikuzawa, Wan Ting Sim, Lionel Chin Soon Ng & Delon Teck Wei Wee.

Observation: One example of about 20 cm total length was observed swimming off the reef slope (Fig. 1). It was seen in the company of a cleaner wrasse (*Labroides dimidiatus*) and a gold-spotted rabbitfish (*Signanus guttatus*) (Fig. 2), as well as other large fishes including spotted sweetlips (*Plectorhinchus chaetodonoides*), six-barred angelfish (*Pomacanthus sexstriatus*) and a coral trout (*Plectropomus* sp.). Although the area appeared to be a wrasse cleaning station, the bannerfish was not observed interacting with the cleaner wrasse or any of the other fishes that were hovering around. It was also not observed feeding.

Remarks: *Heniochus monoceros* is distinguished from its congeners by the prominent protuberance on its forehead, its blackish head and strongly defined broad blackish bar from behind the dorsal fin filament down over the pelvic fins, and yellow soft dorsal, caudal and anal fins. It occurs alone, in pairs, or in small groups in lagoons and on reefs with rich coral growth; and is widely distributed from East Africa, through the tropical Indian Ocean, over Indonesia to Australia, Japan, Micronesia and the Pitcairn Islands in the Pacific (Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 540). As such there is no reason to doubt its natural occurrence in Singapore waters, even though the possibility exists of the featured specimen having been a liberated aquarium pet. This species is traded as an ornamental fish (see Michael, 2004: 201; Tepoot & Tepoot, 1996: 94).

This seems to be the first record of *Heniochus monoceros* in Singapore waters (see Fowler, 1938: 179), and is the third species of bannerfish known to occur there. In July 2008, an example of the humphead bannerfish (*Heniochus varius*) was photographed at the same general area of the Sisters Islands Marine Park. It represented the first record of that species for Singapore (Low et al., 2009: 80). The longfin bannerfish (*Heniochus acuminatus*) has been recorded from Singapore by Bleeker (1861: 50 as *Heniochus macrolepidotus*). Tan & Lim (2015) recently reported on one that was purportedly caught in a fish trap near Sultan Shoal.

References:

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Fig. 1. Lateral view of the masked bannerfish swimming off the reef.



Fig. 2. Masked bannerfish (right) in the company of a gold-spotted rabbitfish (*Siganus guttatus*) in the middle, and a cleaner wrasse (*Labroides dimidiatus*) to the left.

Photographs by Lutfi Afiq-Rosli

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