Klein’s butterflyfish off Pulau Hantu

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Subject: Klein’s butterflyfish, Chaetodon kleinii (Teleostei: Chaetodontidae).

Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait off western Pulau Hantu; 22 September 2019; around 1130 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Coral reef at around 10 m depth.

Observer: Toh Chay Hoon.

Observation: One example of about 10 cm total length was observed swimming among corals (see accompanying picture).

Remarks: The Klein’s butterflyfish is widely distributed throughout tropical and sub-tropical Indo-west and central Pacific from East Africa, through Indonesia to the Hawaiian Islands. It grows up to 14 cm in total length, and occurs singly or in pairs mainly on coral reefs. The species is omnivorous and feeds mainly on soft corals, zooplankton and benthic invertebrates (Allen et al., 1998: 159; Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 524).

Although the Klein’s butterflyfish had not been recorded previously in Singapore (see Fowler, 1938), the country lies in the middle of its range, so its occurrence there is not surprising. Its apparent rarity there could perhaps be its disfavour for the type of silty reefs in Singapore waters. However, it being an ornamental fish that is commonly imported from the surrounding region such as the Philippines and Indonesia (K. K. P. Lim, personal observation), the possibility of the featured individual being a liberated aquarium pet should not be ruled out.

References:

Lateral view of the Klein’s butterflyfish off Pulau Hantu.
Photograph by Toh Chay Hoon