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## Sighting of a comet, *Calloplesiops altivelis*, off Pulau Hantu

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**Subject:** Comet, *Calloplesiops altivelis* (Teleostei: Plesiopidae).

**Subject identified by:** Toh Chay Hoon.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Strait off Pulau Hantu; 20 September 2020, 1540 hrs.

**Habitat:** Marine. Under concrete jetty among coral reef. At 10 m depth.

**Observer:** Toh Chay Hoon.

**Observation:** An example of about 15 cm total length (Fig. 1 & 2) was observed for about 5 minutes from a distance of about one metre. It appeared tolerant of torchlight being shone on it, and swam about in full view, although it retreated briefly into a crevice twice.

**Remarks:** The comet was recorded from Singapore waters by Lee (2003: 125) based on an undated photograph. It is featured as a component of Singapore's fauna by Wang & Lim (2011: 271). On social media, divers have reported their encounters with this fish off Pulau Hantu in 2005 and 2008. In addition, the observer/author unintentionally photographed an individual 13 years ago on 29 April 2007 off the western side of Pulau Hantu (Fig. 3). Largely hidden except for the head, it was noticed only when the picture was being reviewed. In general, the comet seems to be a rarely seen fish in Singapore.

Despite its flamboyant appearance, the comet seems to be a rather secretive fish that inhabits crevices and caves of outer reefs from depths of 3 to 45 m. It ranges widely in the Indo-west Pacific from the Red Sea and East Africa, eastwards through Indonesia, to Australia, the Line and Tuamotu Islands, northwards to Japan (Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 347).



Fig. 1. Lateral view of *Calloplesiops altivelis*, in-situ, off Pulau Hantu on 20 September 2020. Photograph by Toh Chay Hoon

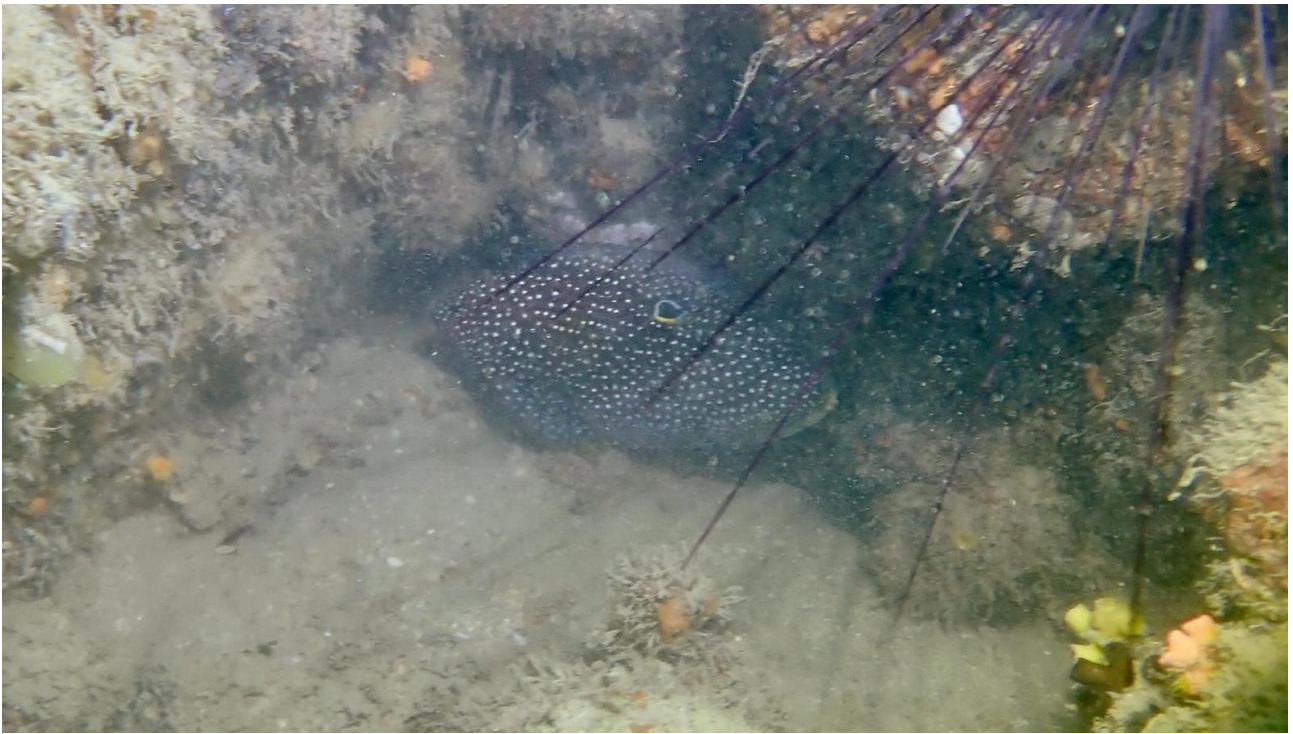


Fig. 2. The comet on 20 September 2020 and its immediate environment from a further perspective, with a long-spined sea urchin in the foreground. Photograph by Toh Chay Hoon

**References:**

- Allen GR & Erdmann MV (2012) Reef Fishes of the East Indies. Tropical Reef Research, Perth, Australia. xiii + 1-424 (Vol. 1), 425-856 (Vol. 2), 857-1292 (Vol. 3).
- Lee K [ed.] (2003) Singapore Waters. Unveiling our Seas. Marine Conservation Group, Nature Society (Singapore). 145 pp.
- Wang LK & KKP Lim (2011) Comets *Callopleles altivelis*. In: Ng PKL, Corlett RT & Tan HTW (eds.) Singapore Biodiversity. An Encyclopedia of the Natural Environment and Sustainable Development. Editions Didier Millet and the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research. p. 271.



Fig. 3. The head of a comet peering out of a crevice (indicated by arrow at the left upper section), while the main subject, a filefish (*Acreichthys tomentosus*) is at the right lower section. This picture was taken off the western side of Pulau Hantu on 29 April 2007. Photograph by Toh Chay Hoon