

Rediscovery of spotfin frogfish in Singapore

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Subject: Spotfin frogfish, *Antennatus nummifer* (Teleostei: Antennariidae).

Subject identified by: Tan Heok Hui.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait off western Pulau Hantu; 22 September 2019; around 1050 hrs.

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

Observers: Tan Tsu Su, Toh Chay Hoon, Garvin Goh Jiayu & Robert Tan.

Observation: An example of about 5 cm total length (Fig. 1) emerged from under a piece of dead plate coral the side of which observer Tan was prodding. The purplish frogfish swam to the underside of a large piece of overgrown dead coral. Observer Tan took about 20 seconds of turning the dead coral around before he spotted the frogfish again, nestled in a shallow depression (Fig. 2).

Remarks: The spotfin frogfish can be told apart from other frogfishes in Singapore waters by the following characters: presence of large, round blackish spot at the base of the soft dorsal fin; illicium (modified first dorsal spine that functions like a fishing rod with lure) short, about equal to length of second dorsal spine which is curved with a small membrane along its hind margin; third dorsal spine nearly straight and not connected to the head by membrane; distinct caudal peduncle. The species can grow up to 12.5 cm in total length, and occurs mainly on coral reefs from East Africa across the Indo-west Pacific to Hawaiian Islands (Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 147 as *Antennarius nummifer*). It also ranges westwards into the eastern and central Atlantic (see Brown et al., 2019: 181).

The spotfin frogfish was first recorded from Singapore some 159 years ago by Bleeker (1860: 447; 1861: 42 as *Antennarius nummifer*). It was not heard of again until the present observation.

References:

- Allen, G. R. & M. V. Erdmann, 2012. *Reef Fishes of the East Indies. Volume I*. Tropical Reef Research, Perth, Australia. xiii + 424 pp.
- Bleeker, P. 1860. Derde bijdrage tot de kennis der vischfauna van Singapoera. *Natuurkundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche-Indië*. 20: 446-456.
- Bleeker, P. 1861. Mededeeling omtrent vischsoorten, nieuw voor de kennis der fauna van Singapoera. *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Letterkunde, en Schoone Kunsten te Amsterdam*. 12 (1): 28-63.
- Brown, J., A. Beard, E. Clingham, R. Fricke, L. Henry & P. Wirtz, 2019. The fishes of St Helena Island, central Atlantic Ocean - new records and an annotated check-list. *Zootaxa*. 4543 (2): 151-194.



Fig. 1. Lateral view of the frogfish in the open after being disturbed in its hiding place. Note nearly straight third dorsal spine and relatively short illicium (stalk of 'fishing lure'). Photograph by Tan Tsu Soo



Fig. 2. The frogfish pressed against a shallow depression. Note the large blackish spot at the base of the soft dorsal fin. Photograph by Toh Chay Hoon