

Biodiversity Record: Rediscovery of the seahorse, *Hippocampus spinosissimus*, in Singapore

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Subject: Hedgehog seahorse, *Hippocampus spinosissimus* (Teleostei: Syngnathiformes: Syngnathidae).

Subject identified by: Adam Lim Chee Ooi.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait, Sentosa Island, Serapong reefs; 24 May 2026; around 1120 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Coral reef with flat and sandy bottom, at depth of 8–9 m.

Observer: Victor Toh.

Observation: A female of about 10 cm total length (Fig. 1) was found among loose rubble on the seafloor. It was in an upright position with little swimming and appeared to be taking shelter in a small depression from the currents.

Remarks: *Hippocampus spinosissimus* seems to prefer living near coral reefs on sandy bottoms, often around octocorals and macroalgae (Lourie et al., 2004). It is typically found at depths of more than 8 m, down to a maximum reported depth of 70 m (Pollom, 2017). Because it is collected and traded as dried seahorses for traditional medicine and curios, and as ornamental fish (Laksanawimol et al., 2013), *Hippocampus spinosissimus* is listed as an internationally Vulnerable species (Pollom, 2017).

In Singapore, *Hippocampus spinosissimus* was last reported from Siglap by Tweedie (1936 as *Hippocampus spinosissimus* and *Hippocampus hystrix*). There have been no records of this species in the country since then (see Jaafar et al., 2024). The present record thus represents a rediscovery of this seahorse and the first sighting since the 1930s. It suggests that suitable subtidal habitats such as Serapong reefs may serve as potential refugia for it.

Literature cited:

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Fig. 1. In-situ lateral view of the hedgehog seahorse at Serapong reef. (Photograph by: Victor Toh).