

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

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Introduction

The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago comprise of about 572 small and big Islands covering an area of 8.293 Sq. km with a coastline of 1,962 km between 92°- 94° E longitudes and 6°-14° N latitude in the Bay of Bengal. Several significant taxonomic studies have been made on the fish fauna of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. But the document of coastal ichthyofaunal diversity of the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP) area is quite meagre except a brief report by Rao et al (2000) The MGMNP is located in the South western coast of South Andaman between 11°22'06" to 11°36'34" N latitude and 092° 30'00" to 092° 40'33" E longitude, covering a total area of 281. 5 km². The park consists of 15 islands, viz., Alexandra, Red Skin, Boat, Hobday, Grub, Snob, Belly, Chester, Rifleman, Pluto, Malay, Jolly Buoy, Twins, Tarmugli, and part of Rutland Island.

Methodology

Ichthyofaunal surveys have been carried out on January 2014 by using SCUBA at Rutland Island and Red Skin Island of Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP), South Andaman (Fig.1) revealed the presence of two teleosts namely, *Plectorhinchus ceylonensis* (Smith, 1956) (Haemulidae) and *Blenniella Chrysopilos* (Bleeker, 1857) (Gobiidae) which are reported herein as new distributional records to India. Underwater photography was taken by Sony Cyber Shot (DSC- T 900) with housing facility. All the species were identified using standard systematic taxonomic keys (Allen et al, 2010; McKay, 1984).

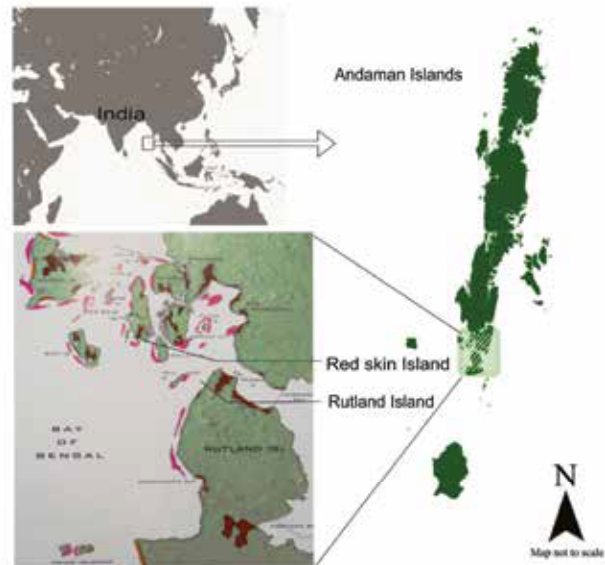


Fig.1. Map showing the Study Area of MGMNP

Results

Systematic account

Perciformes Bleeker, 1859

Haemulidae Gill, 1885

Plectorhinchus Lacepede, 1802

***Plectorhinchus ceylonensis* (Smith, 1956) Fig.2A**

Materials examined

This species was recorded Red Skin Islands (11°34.682'N; 092°35.436'E) at 8-10 m deep (Fig. 2B).

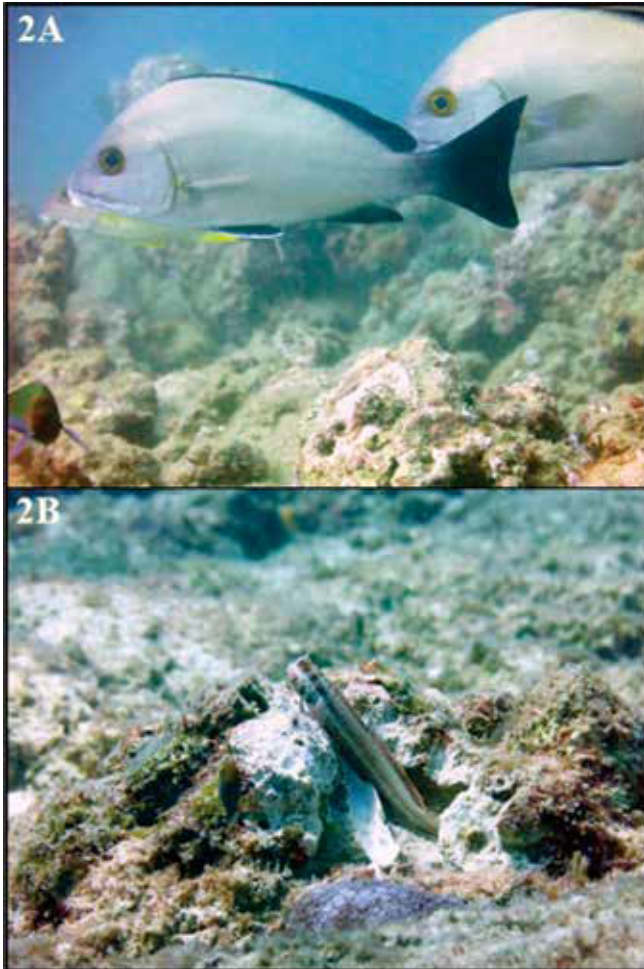


Fig. 2A. Species of Srilankan sweetlips, *Plectorhinchus ceylonensis* at Red Skin Island on 15 January 2014 at fringe reefs (8-10m)

Fig. 2B. Species of red spotted blenny *Blenniella Chrysospilos* photographed at Rutland Island on 14 January 2014 at reef flats site (depth 3-5m).

Diagnostic character

The individuals studied were characterized by having greyish silvery body, ventrally white head, operculum margin brownish yellow; Pectoral fin pale with dark axil and other fins black, caudal fin slightly emarginated. The photographed individuals was part of a loose group of five individuals all have same colour pattern. This species are found only small to large aggregations in coastal fringing reefs areas (Allen and Erdmann, 2012). In producing eggs that mature and hatch distinct pairing during the breeding period. (Breder and Rosen, 1966).

Distribution: Western Indian Ocean: restricted to Sri Lanka.

IUCN: Not evaluated.

Blenniidae Rafinesque, 1810

Blenniella Reid, 1943

***Blenniella chrysospilos* (Bleeker, 1857) Fig. 2B**

Materials examined

This species was recorded from Rutland Island (11°30.570'N; 092°38.595'E) in the reef flat at 3-5 meter (Fig. 2A).

Diagnostic character

A very attractive blenny characterized by tan to nearly white slender body with numerous brilliant red spots on head and a single row of red spots below dorsal fin base from head to caudal peduncle; double red bars started from mid body to caudal base; dorsal and pectoral fins with red spots; branched cirri above eyes, was observed on coral rocks and photographed. The subsequent analysis of their morphological characters revealed that we dealt with specimens of the red spotted blenny *Blenniella Chrysospilos* (Bleeker, 1857) reported first time from Indian waters. The adults fishes are inhabit clear coastal reef flats, frequently in exposed habitats, common in outer intertidal reef flats and surge-swept seaward reef; They enter small holes, with just its head protruding. They feed on algae and associated detritus and small invertebrates. Oviparous. Eggs are demersal and adhesive (Breder and Rosen, 1966).

Distribution

East Africa to Micronesia and Society Island, and Ryukyu Islands to Australia (eastern and western); throughout East Indian region (Allen and Erdmann, 2012).

IUCN Status: Least Concern.

Discussion

The red spotted blenny *Blenniella chrysospilos* was originally described by (Bleeker, 1857) and it is not known

to India so far. The srilankan sweetlips, *Plectorhinchus ceylonensis* was first described by Smith (1956) and considered endemic to Sri Lanka. Our findings indicate its range extension and the urgent need for periodical surveys for precise documentation of the ichthyofaunal diversity of the Islands.

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