The Distribution of Some Uncommon Reef Fishes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A Short Note

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Abstract

In this paper, we are reporting five uncommon fishes, viz. Chinese trumpetfish, Aulostomus chinensis (Linnaeus, 1766), Sling jaw wrasse, Epibulus insidiator (Pallas, 1770), Yellowface angelfish, Pomacanthus xanthometopon (Bleeker, 1853), Black–velvet angelfish, Chaetodontoplus melanosoma (Bleeker, 1853) and Barred soapfish, Diploprion bifasciatus (Cuvier, 1828) with their locality data in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. All these fishes have been listed previously though without locality data. At present, these fishes are found to be rare with restricted distribution in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Keywords: P Archipelago; Distribution; Ichthyofauna; India; Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

The ichthyofauna of Andaman and Nicobar archipelago has been studied since the 19th century (Blyth, 1846). A total of 1434 fish species reported under 165 families from Andaman water (Rajan et al., 2013). In this paper, five uncommon fishes, viz. Chinese trumpetfish, Aulostomus chinensis, (Linnaeus, 1766), Sling-jaw wrasse, Epibulus insidiator (Pallas, 1770), Yellowface angelfish, Pomacanthus xanthometopon (Bleeker, 1853), Black–velvet angelfish, Chaetodontoplus melanosoma (Bleeker, 1853) and Barred soapfish, Diploprion bifasciatus (Cuvier, 1828) are reported herein along with their locality data in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These fishes belong to four different families viz., Aulostomidae Rafinesque, 1815, Labridae Cuvier, 1816, Pomacanthidae Jordan and Evermann, 1898 and Serranidae Swainson, 1839. All these fishes have been listed by Rajan et al., 2013, though without locality data. Among the recorded fishes, three genera viz., Aulostomus Lacepède, 1803, Epibulus Cuvier, 1815, Diploprion Cuvier, 1828, are represented only one taxon while Chaetodontoplus Bleeker, 1876 is represented by two species in the Islands. Pomacanthus Lacepède, 1802 is the most represented genus (six species) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

In this study marine exploratory surveys using SCUBA/snorkeling were carried out along the coastal stretch of the Andaman Islands during 2015–2018. In-situ photographs were taken using a digital camera (Canon; PowerShot G1X Mark II) with waterproof housing. The images were labeled with the following details viz., abbreviated location code, initials of the researcher, depth (m) and date. The specimens were identified based the available literature (Randall et al., 1997; Allen et al., 2003; Allen & Erdmann, 2012; Froese & Pauly, 2018). The systematic classification and arrangement followed Fricke et al. (2020).

Results and discussion

A single individual of Chinese trumpetfish camouflaging a gorgonian from a semi-silty coral reef at Champin Island was observed (Fig. 1A). Slender fish; black maxillary stripe present; colour mottled brown to green, caudal fin yellow with rounded black spots; a black spot at the base of pelvic fins. The distribution of this species is currently restricted to Namcowry group of Islands. This species is known to rely partly on stealth and camouflage (Froese & Pauly, 2018).

A “brown phase” male of Epibulus insidiator was observed from a shallow coral reef habitat in Grub Island, Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (Fig. 1B). Body deep, dark green edges on scales; caudal fin emarginated to lunate; black lines radiating from eye. It was observed holding its protrusable mouth open, which could be a visit to the cleaning stations. A single individual of
Pomacanthus xanthometopon was observed from a shallow coral reef at “Small World” a popular dive site in Neil Island (Fig. 1C). This species is usually solitary in a coral rich reef area. Body deeply compressed; upper back and most of the body whitish, breast, caudal and pectoral fins and posterior part of anal fins yellow, a yellow mask surrounding eyes, head blue, a black spot at rear base of dorsal fin.

Six individuals of Chaetodontoplus melanosoma was observed from Rutland Island (Fig. 1D). This is an uncommon species inhabiting coral reefs and reef rubbles with rich invertebrate growth. Several individuals of Diploprion bifasciatum was observed from Nanowry (Fig. 1E). Body compressed; and yellow; caudal fin rounded; pelvic fins long; two blackish bars, one on head though eye and a broader one on the body. It is important to note that this species is particularly abundant in Nanowry group of Islands and has not been recorded from other localities of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands so far. Its absence from the other localities could not be comprehended.

Fig. 1. Fishes recorded in the present study
A - Aulostomus chinensis (Linnaeus, 1766); B - Epibulus insidiator (Pallas, 1770);
C - Pomacanthus xanthometopon (Bleeker, 1855); D - Chaetodontoplus melanosoma (Bleeker, 1855);
E - Diploprion bifasciatum (Cuvier, 1828)
The locality data of all the fishes recorded in the presented study is presented in Table 1. At present, these fishes are found to be rare with restricted distribution in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. More surveys are required to understand the distribution of these uncommon fishes precisely in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>GPS Coordinates</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aulostomus chinensis</td>
<td>Champin, Nancowry</td>
<td>Nicobar</td>
<td>08°01.719’N 093°33.150’E</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epibulus insidiator</td>
<td>Grub Is., MGMNP</td>
<td>South Andaman</td>
<td>11° 35.474’N 92° 35.712’E</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Pomacanthus xanthometopon</td>
<td>Neil Is.</td>
<td>South Andaman</td>
<td>12°56.263’N 92°57.049’E</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaetodontoplus melanosoma</td>
<td>Rutland Is.</td>
<td>South Andaman</td>
<td>11°27.696’N 11°27.696’E</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploprion bifasciatum</td>
<td>Champin, Nancowry</td>
<td>Nicobar</td>
<td>08°01.719’N 093°33.150’E</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saanu, Nancowry</td>
<td>Nicobar</td>
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</table>

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### References


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