



Mangroves for the Future  
INVESTING IN COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

*Field Guide to*

# Reef Fishes

of Sri Lanka



Volume 2

**Arjan Rajasuriya**

Illustrations by Shantha Jayaweera





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## FOREWORD

This second volume of the Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka is a further contribution by Mr. Arjan Rajasuriya, following the first volume of Reef Fishes published in year 2013.

Mr. Rajasuriya is the IUCN Sri Lanka Coordinator for Marine & Coastal Thematic Area and the Sri Lanka Project Manager of the Mangroves for the Future Regional Project on Living resources of the Gulf of Mannar, covering both India and Sri Lanka.

His outstanding knowledge and long experience, spanning over four decades, in marine related subjects has greatly helped and provided the solid base required to bring out this quality publication. As a field person who respects the natural world and its occupants, his passion for the subject is reflected in the details provided in this set of field guides on Reef Fishes.

It is our strong belief and wish that these two Field Guides will add to the knowledge and understanding of the Reef Fishes. We also hope the same will enhance the interest, awareness and appreciation of Reef Fishes among all stakeholder groups leading to increased attention and conservation of their populations, habitats and diversity. This information may also be expected to promote sustainable uses of natural resources such as ecotourism.

In that context Mr. Rajasuriya's contribution on Reef Fishes is highly valuable and timely. This publication will add to IUCN efforts to help Sri Lanka to reap the benefits of its ecosystems and natural resources, while ensuring the sustainability of the same resources. Hope you will enjoy, benefit and add value to the appreciation, judicious use and conservation of the natural environment .



## PREFACE

After publishing the first volume of the Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka, IUCN requested me to publish another one. I readily agreed as we had only covered 158 species in volume one. This gave me the opportunity to add another 102 species and bring up the total to 260 species. The species dealt with in volume one were from 37 families and this volume deals with another 14 to raise the total covered in both volumes to 51 families.

The 260 species described up to now, is very much less than the number of species that one will see while snorkelling or diving around Sri Lanka. I had to be very discerning in selecting the species to be illustrated. Many species had to be left out. I have attempted to include most of the colourful species that snorkelers and divers would encounter and observe. After all, it is the colourful and unusual fish that attract our attention and spark our interest in marine life. However, I have not completely ignored the small and beautiful small fish, such as damselfish (Pomacentridae) and colourful wrasses (Labridae). In addition, I have included some species that are rarely seen because they are either uncommon or cryptic. I have included at least one species from a family that contains several such fishes, to show that they do occur in Sri Lanka. It will serve the observer as an example and assist in narrowing down the identification to a particular family or group of fishes. The flat fish – Lefteye Flounder (*Bothus pantherinus*) is an example. There are Righteye flounders too. If one is familiar with the shape of the fish it is much easier to narrow down the search to a particular group of fishes. This volume has 108 illustrations, including in some cases females and juveniles of the same species where the colour difference is significant, and it is difficult to imagine that it is a single species. Bicolor parrotfish (*Cetoscarus bicolor*) is an example.

Today, reefs are under greater threat than ever before. I encountered dynamiters every day during reef surveys at Vankalai, Arippu and Silavaturai in the Gulf of Mannar, in early 2014. No authorities were present to stop them from carrying out their routine dynamiting on the extensive shallow coral banks in the area. There were large patches of destroyed coral because of this prohibited fishing operation. Uncontrolled and excessive resource exploitation, coastal development and pollution keep on adding more and more pressure to a diminishing resource. When I first learned to use a mask and fins at Wellawatte, Colombo 4, the water was blue and clear on the first reef with large groups of damsel fish (*Pomacentrus similis*) and many other species too numerous to mention here. However, today the same reef is barren, the colour gone and the water eternally turbid and heavily polluted. I fear to bathe in the sea there for fear of catching a disease. Such is the transformation of the coastal waters of Colombo that has taken place since the 1960's.

Therefore, it is hoped that this field guide together with its companion *Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka Volume 1* will be a useful resource for snorkelers and divers, and all those who are interested in marine life to expand their knowledge on identification of species found in our reef habitats. I hope those who care will raise their voices to protect what remains.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Mangroves for the Future initiative (MFF) for providing financial resources for the production of this publication and to Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri, Country Representative, IUCN Sri Lanka, for giving me this opportunity. Special thanks are due to Mr. Shamen Vidanage, Programme Coordinator of IUCN Sri Lanka, and to Ms. Kumudini Ekaratne, MFF National Coordinator for Sri Lanka, for encouraging me to write the *Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka, Volume 1* and to follow it up with Volume 2, and for their continued support during this assignment. I thank Dr. Tilak Wettasinghe for editing the text in this volume. Dr. Wettasinghe's, discerning queries and suggestions regarding details of reef fish helped me to improve the way information is presented. I also wish to thank Mr. Shantha Jayaweera for the beautiful and accurate illustrations of reef fish and all my colleagues at IUCN for their unstinted support.

Thanks are also due to Mr. Nishan Perera, who shared with me his knowledge about seahorses, particularly their identification, distribution and trade.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. M.W. Ranjith N. De Silva who taught me about corals and coral reefs during the early stages of my career at the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency of Sri Lanka (NARA) where I gathered much knowledge on reefs and their beautiful denizens. Thank you.

## INTRODUCTION

The Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka Volume 2 is a companion to Volume 1 (Rajasuriya, 2013). Volume 1 contained information on 158 species of reef fish belonging to 37 families and this volume describes another 102 species of reef fish from 31 families. Together they cover 260 species of reef fish from 51 families. Species information, in both volumes, is based on published literature and the knowledge and experience gathered by the author since the early 1970's.

Description of habitats, distribution of species, threats to reef fishes, overexploitation, impacts from fishing and climate change, and other relevant sections from Volume 1 have been included in this volume with minor changes where appropriate. Family descriptions in Volume 1 have been retained when species belonging to these families are included in this volume.

Detailed underwater studies on behaviour of reef fish and their population dynamics is lacking in Sri Lanka. Reef surveys conducted at several sites by NARA and others have revealed that Sri Lanka has a high diversity of reef fishes, but the areas covered by surveys are quite small and much needs to be explored and documented. Even during reef monitoring certain limitations prevent a thorough investigation of the diversity, distribution and abundance of reef fish. However, many species of reef fish are being harvested for consumption and for export as aquarium fish. The use of scuba diving to harvest reef species has increased tremendously in the past three decades and resources such as sea cucumber and chanks have already been overexploited. These same fishermen have turned their attention to reef fish and have begun to spear groupers and endangered species such as the Humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) described in Volume 1.

Reef fish habitats are also under threat from destructive fishing, including blast fishing and the use of nets to catch reef fish and lobsters. Coral bleaching and predators such as Crown-of-thorns starfish also cause serious damage to reef habitats.

## Habitats of reef fishes in Sri Lanka

The continental shelf of Sri Lanka supports many reef habitats. Reef habitats are patches of hard ground separated by areas of sand or mud, and are located at various distances from the shore.

Reefs that are close to the shore, within 2 kilometres of the shoreline, are called **fringing reefs**. They occur as a narrow belt around the coast. They may or may not contain a reef lagoon, which is a narrow body of water between the fringing reef and the shore. Examples of fringing reefs can be seen at Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Weligama in the south, and along the coast of the Jaffna Peninsula in the north.

Reefs that are located beyond the immediate vicinity of the coastline are called **offshore reefs**. In this document, the term 'offshore' is used to describe reefs that are located approximately 2 kilometres beyond the shoreline and up to the edge of the continental shelf.

Fringing and offshore reefs have been divided into three habitat types; coral, sandstone and rock reefs, based on the type of substrate that is visible.

**Coral reef habitats** are typically made up of living hard corals. Examples of coral habitats can be seen at Hikkaduwa and at Pigeon Island (Figure 1). Extensive coral reefs are located offshore in the Gulf of Mannar, at Vankalai, Silavaturai, Arrippu and Bar Reef. Other major coral reef areas are from Akurala to Tangalle in the south, Kutchchaveli to Kalmunai in the east and around the Jaffna Peninsula.



**Figure 1. Coral reef Habitat**

**Sandstone reefs** are widespread and are found nearshore, as well as offshore, up to the edge of the continental shelf. They support small patches of hard and soft corals. The majority are located along bathymetric gradients on the continental shelf, and are therefore approximately parallel to the coast (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Sandstone reef habitat**

**Rock reef habitats** are of hard rock, which is granite or a similar hard substrate and are part of the bedrock. Examples of rock reefs can be found along the coast in the south and in Trincomalee (Figure 3). Some can be seen nearshore, as well as offshore when sections are above the water. Sometimes they form islands such as Pigeon Island in the east. Rock reef structures occur as patches or ridges on the continental shelf and beyond.



**Figure 3. Rock reef habitat**

The depths of reef habitats vary from a about a metre in the intertidal zone to more than 100 meters near the edge of the continental shelf. The continental shelf is widest in the Gulf of Mannar and in the northeast, where reef habitats at a depth of about 50 metres can be found at a distance of up to about 35 kilometres offshore. The continental shelf is narrower in the south, and therefore reef habitats at a depth of 50 metres are only up to about 10 kilometres offshore.

Reef habitats are often linked to seagrass meadows, mangroves and estuaries through transfer of nutrients and the migration of species. Some groups of reef fish — such as rabbit fish (*Siganidae*) — live among seagrass meadows and in mangrove areas during their juvenile stage and migrate to reef habitats as they mature.

### **Distribution of species**

Many reef fish described in this publication are distributed widely in the Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the Red Sea and East African coast, to islands of Polynesia in the Central Pacific. Some are found only in the Indian Ocean. The Sri Lanka sweetlips (*Plectorhinchus ceylonensis*) is endemic to Sri Lanka. Many reef fishes have a pelagic larval stage and are, therefore distributed by ocean currents. However, some have a limited distribution even within

a country. The Eight-banded butterflyfish (*Chaetodon octofasciatus*) described in Volume 1, is an example. This species is found in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay and Palk Strait in Sri Lanka, but is extremely rare or absent on other reef areas of the country. The Bengal sergeant (*Abudefduf bengalensis*) included in this volume is another example. This species is limited to the northwestern, northern and northeastern coastal reefs.

The maximum depth given in this publication for any species is that observed or reported in Sri Lanka. This may differ from the maximum depth throughout its entire range.

Inshore and offshore habitats or areas are terms used in this field guide to describe whether a species is found close to the shore or far from the shore.

## Mimicry

Reef fishes employ a variety of methods to avoid predation or to capture prey. Mimicry is often based on the similarity of colour patterns. The False cleanerfish (*Aspidontus taeniatus*) closely resembles the Cleaner wrasse (*Labroides dimidiatus*) described in Volume 1, as they have very similar colour patterns. It masquerades as a Cleaner wrasse and approaches larger fish to tear off a piece of flesh or scale. While the benefit of resembling a Cleaner wrasse to obtain food can be easily understood, others are more difficult. The colour patterns of the juvenile Indian Ocean mimic surgeonfish (*Acanthurus tristis*) and the adult Eibl's angelfish (*Centropyge eibli*) described in Volume 1, are almost identical. However, it is unclear how they benefit by resembling each other.

## Threats to reef fishes

Coral reefs support human life and livelihoods and are important economically. Nearly 500 million people depend — directly and indirectly — on coral reefs for



their livelihoods, food and other resources. Further, it is estimated that nearly 30 million of the poorest human populations in the world depend entirely on coral reefs for their food.

Despite their immense ecological, economical and aesthetic values, it is estimated that 20% of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed. Another 24% are at high risk of collapse, and yet another 26% at risk from long-term collapse as a result of human activities.

Sri Lanka is no exception. Here too coral reefs are under threat. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) identified five major drivers of biodiversity loss: overexploitation, habitat loss and degradation, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change, and this section on threats will be discussed under these categories.

### Overexploitation

Many coral reef species are exploited commercially. Widespread use of destructive fishing methods — such as bottom-set nets and blast fishing — have damaged reefs and over-harvesting has reduced fish populations. Although netting on reefs is prohibited in Sri Lanka, fishermen continue to do so in the absence of offshore policing. Large reef fish — such as groupers — are vulnerable to over exploitation, especially when they are targeted by spear fishermen using scuba. The removal of the Tomato hind (*Cephalopholis sonnerati*) described in Volume 1 is an example of the damage caused by spear fishing. This species, among others of the same family, is responsible in the maintenance of holes in the reef structures in deep water reefs by fanning sand out of holes to create hiding places. This behaviour creates space for other species — such as the Scarlet shrimp (*Lysmata debelius*) — that is highly sought-after by the aquarium trade. The removal of the Tomato hind by divers has resulted in the holes becoming covered by sand and the loss of habitat for the Scarlet shrimp.

A few uncommon or rare reef fish species are protected under the Fauna and Flora Protection Act No. 2 of 1937 and its amendments and the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 2 of 1996 and its amendments and export is prohibited. However, these species are not protected locally from fishing activities, and are thus, highly vulnerable, even if they are not exported.

### **Habitat degradation due to fishing activities**

Collection of reef fishes for the aquarium trade leads to habitat degradation. Inexperienced fish collectors often disturb the habitat to drive the fish out of hiding places, thus causing much damage to the structure of the reef. Blast fishing also damages the reef. The use of bottom-set nets to catch spiny lobsters and reef fish are widespread in Sri Lanka. Corals, sponges, gorgonians and other organisms on the reef get entangled with these nets and are discarded on the beach when the nets are cleaned. Habitat degradation caused by this destructive fishing method is widespread especially in the Gulf of Mannar. Using nets on reefs is prohibited under the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 2 of 1996.

### **Pollution**

Coastal water pollution is increasing rapidly due the development of coastal cities and industrialization. The impact of pollution on reef fishes has not been studied in Sri Lanka, although the quality of reef habitats has been degrading steadily.

### **Invasive alien species**

Very little is known about marine invasive alien species in this region.

## Climate change

Coral bleaching that occurred in 1998 due to ocean warming triggered by climate change, was responsible for extensive damage to coral reefs in the Indian Ocean. Most coral reef habitats were destroyed completely during this event and many have not recovered. Reef fishes — such as species of butterfly fish — that depend on corals for food were not sighted on these damaged reefs for several years after the bleaching event. However, with the recovery of corals, these species have begun to recolonise some damaged coral reefs.

## Crown-of-thorns starfish

Coral reefs in the Gulf of Mannar and in the east were severely damaged in the 1970's because of a population explosion of the Crown-of-thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*) which is a predator of live corals. Since then, there have been fluctuations in its population. There was a marked decline in the population after they lost their food source in 1998 during the coral bleaching event in the Indian Ocean. What caused the population explosion of the Crown-of-thorns starfish is not known. Even studies conducted for more than 20 years on the Great Barrier Reef have not provided the answers to this problem.

## An explanation of the details given in the species descriptions in this book

- Family** : The name of the family to which the species belong.
- Scientific name** : The Genus and Species name, followed by the name of the author and year of the first description.
- Common name** : Common English name. (As given in Fishbase, the Redlist, Lieske and Myers,1994 and Bruin et al.,1995).
- Length** : Maximum size throughout its range (in cm).
- Colouration** : This information is given for a few species, especially where the colouration differs between males and females, juveniles and adults, and growth stages.
- Distribution** : Geographical extent of the distribution of the species in general; and its distribution in Sri Lanka.

- Habitats** : The habitats occupied by the species in Sri Lanka.
- Depth range** : Observed or reported depth range for the species in Sri Lanka (may be found at a greater depth elsewhere).
- Behaviour** : Observed behaviour in Sri Lanka.
- Diet** : Diet of the species according to published information.
- Economic importance** : Commercial use in Sri Lanka.
- Threats** : Direct drivers of population loss of the species, specific to Sri Lanka.
- IUCN Red List Status** : Conservation status given in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. (See box on page 11)
- Protected status in Sri Lanka** : Legal protection afforded to the species in Sri Lanka.

The IUCN Red List provides the conservation status and information about plants and animals that are facing a high risk of extinction. The process of Red Listing includes a rigorous scientific assessment, centred around a set framework, that examines the change in the status of plants and animals. These assessments identify and document those species, which need the most focused conservation attention. Red Listing is carried out at a global level by the IUCN's Global Species Programme working with some 7,500 volunteer experts from the Species Survival Commission.

Red Listing is also carried out at the national level. In Sri Lanka, Red Listing has been a part of species conservation for the last two decades. It is one of the few Asian countries that has three Red Lists, published in 2012, 2007 and 1999. In Sri Lanka too, the work has been collaborative, involving IUCN Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy and a suite of local experts.

Depending on the degree of threat, the IUCN Red List recognises several categories of status for species, depending on the severity of the risk.

- At the highest end of the scale is Extinct.
- In between are five other categories:
  - o Extinct in the Wild;
  - o Critically Endangered;
  - o Endangered;
  - o Vulnerable; and
  - o Near Threatened.
- At the lowest end of the scale, is Least Concern.
- Data Deficient: A taxon is Data Deficient when there is inadequate information to make a direct, or indirect assessment of the risk of extinction.
- Not evaluated: When it has not yet been evaluated against the Red List criteria.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE FAMILIES AND SPECIES

### **Family: Acanthuridae (Surgeonfish, Tangs and Unicornfish)**

Surgeonfish derive their common name from the sharp scalpel-like blades located at the base of their tails. These blades may be used for attack or defence. When not in use, the tail blades can be folded back against the bodies of these fish. Unicornfish — as indicated by their common name — are characterized by a horn-like extension on the head or a raised bump on the forehead. They also possess two non-foldable spines on either side of the tail base. Both groups are primarily herbivores which browse on macro algae. A few species feed on plankton. Most species exhibit schooling behaviour. They are economically important as food fish, as well as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Balistidae (Triggerfish)**

Triggerfish possess a large, first dorsal spine that can be locked in an erect position with the use of the second dorsal spine. Using these spines, triggerfish lock themselves inside holes and crevices in the reef when threatened or resting. They have very rough skins and have strong jaws and teeth. Most species feed on benthic organisms, such as crabs, shells, starfish and sea urchins, while a few species feed on plankton. Triggerfish lay their eggs in a nest near the base of a reef and aggressively guard this nest.

### **Family: Blenniidae (Blennies)**

Blennies are small fish that live close to the substrate. Most live in holes in the reef structure. Their territories are relatively small and they rest on the substrate most of the time. There are two subfamilies: Blenniinae (Sabre-toothed blennies), and Salariinae (Comb-toothed blennies). The Sabre-toothed blennies have small mouths but large fangs to tear off the flesh of other fish. *Aspidontus taeniatus* belongs to this group. Comb-toothed blennies have blunt heads and wide mouths, and feed on algae. *Ecsenius bicolor* and *Exaltia brevis* belong to this group. Several species of blennies are used as aquarium fish.

**Family: Bothidae (Lefteye flounders)**

Flounders are flatfish that lie on the sand bottom. There are Lefteye and Righteye Flounders. Lefteye flounders lie on the seabed on their right side with both eyes located on the left side of the head. The Righteye flounders have both eyes located on the rightside of the head and they lie on the seabed on their left side. However, at hatching the eyes are located on either side of the head. As the fish metamorphoses from larval to juvenile stage, one of eyes migrates over to the other side of the head. Only the upper surface of the body is pigmented; the undersurface is devoid of pigmentation. Flounders can change colour rapidly to match their surroundings and are therefore well-camouflaged and difficult to spot.

**Family: Caesionidae (Fusiliers)**

Fusiliers are primarily plankton feeders that are found in large schools in mid water over reefs. They are important food fishes and some species are used as baitfish to catch tuna.

**Family: Carangidae (Jacks and Trevallies)**

Jacks and trevallies belong to a large family of fishes. Most species have silver colouration and are well-camouflaged when swimming in open water. All species are carnivorous and feed on a variety of prey, including fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other invertebrates. All are important food fishes. A few have coloured juveniles, suitable for aquariums.

**Family: Carcharhinidae (Requiem sharks)**

This family has many species. Some live in the open ocean, while others are associated with reefs. All are carnivorous and feed on a variety of prey, including fish, cephalopods, molluscs and crustaceans. Sharks are important food fish and the juveniles of some species are used as aquarium fish.



### **Family: Centropomidae\* (Sea basses and Perches)**

\*Please replace with **Latidae**

The family Latidae includes several species of sea basses and perches in the coastal waters of Indian and West Pacific Oceans. Glasseye seaperch described in this field guide is a species found among coral and rocky inshore reefs close to estuaries and coastal lagoons. It is similar in appearance to the Sri Lankan Sea Bass (*Lates lakdiva*). All are carnivorous and are important food fishes.

### **Family: Chaetodontidae (Butterflyfish)**

Butterflyfish are brightly coloured. Their swimming behaviour among coral heads resembles butterflies, hence their common name. Most species in this family are used as aquarium fish. Many species form pairs, while some are solitary others form schools. The majority are omnivorous, while a few species feed on the tentacles of coral polyps. Their presence on a reef is used as an indicator of the health of corals. Most species are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Gobiidae (Gobies)**

Gobies are a large family of small fish. Gobies live in a burrow in the sand. Most species live in pairs. Some species live with a shrimp in the burrow. They are carnivores or plankton feeders. Gobies are difficult to approach and dart into the burrow at the first sign of danger. A number of species are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Haemulidae (Grunts & Sweetlips)**

Grunts and sweetlips (included in Volume 1) belong to the family Haemulidae. The common name of sweetlips is derived from their thickened lips, and grunts from the grunting sound they produce by grinding their pharyngeal teeth. Grunts form schools and can be seen under ledges or over coral heads during daytime. They disperse at night and feed on invertebrates on the sand bottom. Juvenile grunts are not brightly coloured like juvenile sweetlips.

### **Family: Hemiramphidae (Halfbeaks)**

Halfbeaks are pelagic fish and live close to the surface. They travel over a wide area in search of food in the inshore and offshore coastal waters. Some species are common over reef habitats. They feed on large plankton and drifting food items such as seaweed.

### **Family: Holocentridae (Squirrelfishes and Soldierfishes)**

Squirrelfishes and soldierfishes are nocturnal predators. Because of their nocturnal behaviour all the species have large eyes. Almost all species are red in colour and hide during the day under ledges or in caves. They come out at dusk to feed on small fish and invertebrates. Juveniles are occasionally used as aquarium fish. They are also occasionally used as food fish but are not popular because of their bony heads and large scales.

### **Family: Labridae (Wrasses)**

Wrasses belong to a very large family of reef fish. The largest of the family is the Humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) described in Volume 1, is about two metres in length, while the smaller species are only a few centimetres long. Juveniles of many species are differently coloured from adults. They gradually change colour as they grow into adult fish. Most species live in groups dominated by a large male. If the male is removed the largest female will become the next dominant male by changing sex. Juveniles of several wrasse species feed on parasites living on the skin of larger fish. However, they lose this behaviour when they grow into adult fish, except the genus *Labroides* (Cleaner wrasses) described in Volume 1, that remain as cleaners throughout their lives. Species that have colourful juveniles are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Lethrinidae (Emperor fishes)**

Emperor fishes are predators, which are active mainly at night. They feed on invertebrates and fish and are found close to sandy areas adjacent to reef habitats. Most species are capable of changing colour rapidly, depending on the substrate and their moods. They are important food fish. Juveniles of some species are on inshore reefs; adults are usually below three metres and some species are found deeper than 100 metres. They are important food fish.

### **Family: Lutjanidae (Snappers)**

Snappers are a common group of fishes on reef habitats. They are important commercially. Juveniles of some species are on inshore reefs and among seagrass meadows. Some species are found on deep reef habitats over 90 metres. Snappers feed on small fish, crustaceans, cephalopods and other benthic invertebrates. Most species are active at night. Juveniles of about three species are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Microdesmidae (Dartfishes)**

Small elongated reef fish that live in a burrow in the sand bottom close to reef habitats. They feed on zooplankton and can be seen hovering close to their burrows. Most species live in pairs or in small groups. Their ability to dart into the home burrow at the first sign of danger gives them their common name.

### **Family: Monacanthidae (Filefishes)**

Filefishes are closely related to triggerfishes. They derive their common name from the roughness of their skin. Filefish feed on a variety of food items including hard corals. Some species are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Mullidae (Goatfishes)**

Goatfishes derive their common name from a pair of barbels located under the lower jaw. When not in use the barbels can be folded back. The barbels are highly sensitive and they are used to locate food in the sand and in holes on the reef. Some species are active at night and form large inactive aggregations during daytime and hover over reefs. Others are solitary and forage on the sand bottom during the day. Other fish, especially the Thumbprint emperor (*Lethrinus harak*) described in Volume 1, follow goatfish to feed on prey unearthed by the feeding behaviour of the goatfish. Goatfish are important food fish and juveniles of some species are used as aquarium fish.

**Family: Nemipteridae (Monocle breams)**

Monocle breams are common reef fish on coastal and offshore reefs. They are closely associated with the bottom of the sea bed and rarely swim more than one metre above the sea bed. Some species are found on relatively deep reefs at 30 to 50 metres. They have a typical swimming behavior: the fish starts to move and then stops after a short distance and stays in mid water just above the bottom for a short while, before moving on and repeating the same behaviour. This behaviour appears to be a method to scan the surrounding area to locate their food that includes a variety of invertebrates such as bristleworms, isopods, small crabs and other benthic organisms. They are important food fish.

**Family: Ophichthidae (Snake eels)**

Snake eels have long cylindrical bodies and live in the sandy areas adjacent to reefs. They spend much of their time buried in the sand and are rarely seen in the open areas. Snake eels feed on small crabs and other crustaceans burrowing in the sand. They use the tail to disturb the sand to gain access to their prey. Snake eels are capable of rapidly diving into the sand to avoid predators. They are highly popular aquarium species and threatened due to over-collection.

**Family: Pomacentridae (Damsel fish and Clown fish)**

Damsel fish are a large and diverse group of relatively small-sized fish. They live close to the substrate for protection and to obtain food. Damsel fish also occupy many different niches on the reef habitat. Some species prefer branching corals, while others occupy only the tabulate coral species. Several species prefer holes in the reef structure or are found among coral rubble at the base of the reef. Their food preferences are equally diverse: from zooplankton to macro algae. Species that feed on plankton can be seen hovering over corals in schools of more than 100 individuals. There are some species that feed exclusively on algae and they maintain patches of algae within the territory of each fish and allow only the required species of algae to grow and weed out all other species of algae. These species are known as farmer fish. They

are also highly territorial and attack all intruders, including humans. Most damselfish species form small groups or schools.

All species of clown fish and several species of damselfish are used as aquarium fish. Export of Kuiter's damselfish (*Chrysiptera kuiteri*) is prohibited under the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.

### **Family: Priacanthidae (Bigeyes)**

Fishes in this family are nocturnal and have large eyes. During the day, they remain close to home under rock ledges and near caves. They roam widely at night and feed on large zooplankton. During daytime, they are red coloured and blotched at night. They are usually solitary; sometimes found in small groups.

### **Family: Scaridae (Parrotfishes)**

Parrotfish derive their common name from their fused teeth that resemble the beak of a parrot. They feed by scraping algae growing on the reef. Some species may eat the tips of branching corals or scrape the surface of boulder corals. Juveniles occupy coral rubble areas and are in mixed species groups making it very difficult to identify, as most species have similar colouration. However, adults of most species are very brightly coloured and conspicuous on the reef. Usually, parrotfish are seen in groups dominated by a large male. Parrotfish rest at night within a mucous cocoon, to protect themselves from crabs and other nocturnal reef dwellers. Many species are important food fish. Juveniles of some highly attractive species are used as aquarium fish.

### **Family: Scatophagidae (Scats)**

Scats have a highly compressed deep body. A schooling species, they are abundant in coastal lagoons and in estuaries. Adults are also found on fringing reefs close to freshwater sources such as rivers and canals. Scats feed primarily on algae. They are used as aquarium fish and food fish.

### **Family: Scombridae (Tunas and Mackerels)**

Tunas and mackerels, which belong to this family, are carnivorous species that feed on fish. They are important food fish. Larger species live in the open sea, while some smaller ones are in coastal waters. One of the smaller species – *Rastrelliger kanagurta*, illustrated in this volume, feeds on zooplankton and lives in coastal waters. It is seen on inshore reefs seasonally, especially prior to the onset of the monsoons when there is a higher concentration of plankton.

### **Family: Serranidae (Sea basses and Groupers)**

Groupers belong to a commercially important group of fishes. They are common on coastal and offshore reef habitats. The largest in the family, the Giant grouper, grows to about two metres in length. Most species are ambush predators and rest near crevices and ledges of the reef. All large groupers are carnivorous and feed on fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. The smallest in the family are Anthias, that are also known as Fairy basslets. Anthias feed on plankton and aggregate over coral heads on offshore reefs in clear water. Several species of groupers are used as aquarium fish. The export of the Giant grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*) and Blue-and-yellow grouper (*Epinephelus flavocaeruleus*) are prohibited under the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.

### **Family: Sphyraenidae (Barracudas)**

Barracudas are predatory reef fish. They have large mouths and sharp teeth to capture prey. The smaller species school while the large Great Barracuda is usually solitary, and is active diurnally and nocturnally. All species are important food fish.

### **Family: Stegostomatidae (Zebra sharks)**

Zebra sharks are inshore reef sharks. They are sluggish during daytime and are found in cracks and under ledges during the day. They roam in the night to feed on molluscs, crustaceans and small fish. Juveniles are highly popular in the aquarium trade.

### **Family: Syngnathidae (Seahorses and Pipefishes)**

There are several species of seahorses and pipefishes in Sri Lanka. Seahorses occur mainly in the seagrass meadows in coastal lagoons and inshore areas. Some species also occur on reef habitats, usually on sea fans or gorgonians. Many are well-camouflaged and difficult to spot underwater; to make matters worse the water in their habitats is not clear due to sedimentation. They feed on zooplankton and small benthic crustaceans. Not all species of seahorses and pipefish have been properly identified in Sri Lanka. Among seahorses, two species (*Hippocampus fuscus* and *H. spinosissimus*) are common in the northwestern and northern coastal lagoons and seagrass meadows, and have been used regularly in the aquarium trade and exported in dried form for traditional Chinese medicine (N. Perera personal communication, August 3, 2014). *Hippocampus kuda*, illustrated in this volume, is probably uncommon to rare in Sri Lanka. Several species of seahorses are categorized as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species due to overexploitation for traditional Chinese medicine and for the aquarium trade. International trade of seahorses is strictly monitored under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).

Pipefishes are mostly found in calm reef lagoons and along the shores of bays. Several species of pipefishes are common in Trincomalee, especially in the inner harbour area.

### **Family: Torpedinidae (Electric rays)**

Electric rays live on reef habitats and are relatively well-camouflaged. They are sluggish and do not move unless disturbed. The ray possesses two kidney-shaped electric organs on either side of the head that can generate an electric current to stun small prey. The Marbled Electric Ray, illustrated in this volume, is relatively common in Sri Lanka.

### 1 *Acanthurus tennentii* Günther, 1861 – Doubleband surgeonfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Andaman Sea and southern Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

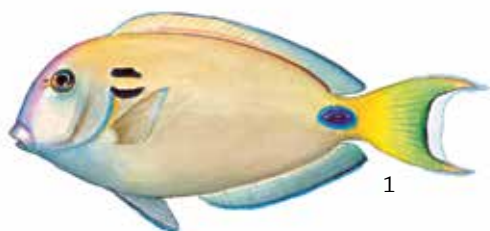
### 2 *Acanthurus tristis* Randall, 1993 – Indian Ocean mimic surgeonfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 25 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles mimic the colour of *Centropyge eibli* (see Field Guide to Reef Fishes of Sri Lanka Volume 1); adults as illustrated. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Seychelles, Maldives, Chagos, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Burma. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs or in groups. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Paracanthurus hepatus* (Linnaeus, 1766) – Palette surgeonfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Mainly on eastern coastal and offshore reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Always associated with tabulate Acropora and branching Pocillopora corals. **DEPTH RANGE:** 10-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups. **DIET:** Zooplankton and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





### 1 *Melichthys indicus* Randall & Klausewitz, 1973 – Indian triggerfish

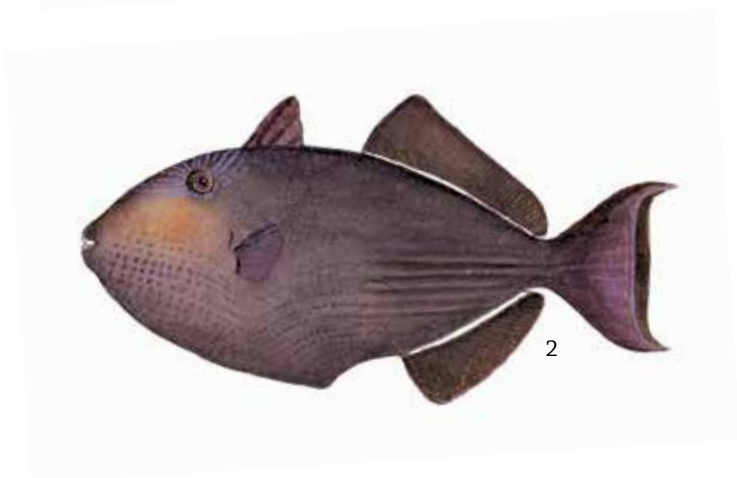
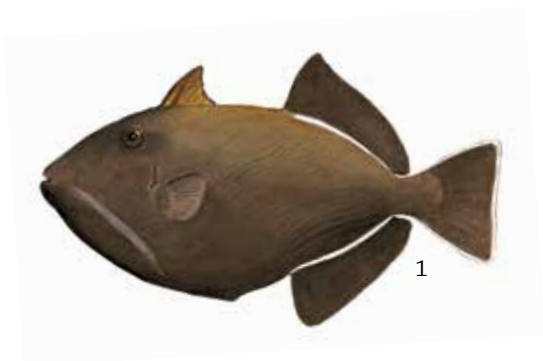
**LENGTH:** Maximum - 25 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Common among eastern coastal reefs; rare or absent in other areas. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Hides in a hole in the reef when threatened, and uses the dorsal spines to lock itself to prevent from being pulled out by predators. **DIET:** Crustaceans, sponges and benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Melichthys niger* (Bloch, 1786) – Black triggerfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Circumtropical. **In Sri Lanka:** Common among eastern coastal reefs; rare or absent in other areas. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Small groups or loose aggregations. Hides in a hole in the reef when threatened, and uses the dorsal spines to lock itself to prevent from being pulled out by predators. **DIET:** Zooplankton and calcareous algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Pseudobalistes fuscus* (Bloch & Schneider, 1801) – Yellow-spotted triggerfish / Jigsaw triggerfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 50 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, Great Barrier Reef and Society Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Uncommon; occurs mainly among eastern coastal reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral and sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 10-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Hides in a hole in the reef when threatened, and uses the dorsal spines to lock itself to prevent from being pulled out by predators. Large individuals are territorial and aggressive during nest guarding. **DIET:** Crustaceans, sea urchins, molluscs and tunicates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Aspidontus taeniatus* Quoy & Gaimard, 1834 – False cleanerfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 11 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Australia, and Micronesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Relatively uncommon but widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Lives in pairs in holes in the reef structure; solitary while feeding. Mimics the cleaner wrasse (*Labroides dimidiatus*). This mimicry allows it to approach an unsuspecting fish and tear off a piece of its flesh. **DIET:** Skin, flesh and scales from other fish and tube worms and fish eggs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** None. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Ecsenius bicolor* (Day, 1888) – Bicolor blenny

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 11 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Micronesia, and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Lives in holes in the reef structure or in dead barnacles. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Spends most of the time resting in a crevice or hole in the reef structure. Feeding range extends no more than 2 m from home. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. Two colour phases are found in Sri Lanka; one as shown and the other a uniform dark brown which is not used by the aquarium trade. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Exallias brevis* (Kner, 1868) – Leopard blenny

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 14 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Hawaii and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Common among eastern coastal reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Spends most of the time resting on the substrate or among coral branches; moves when disturbed or to forage. **DIET:** Hard coral tissue. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Occasionally used as Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Bothus pantherinus* (Rüppell, 1830) – Leopard flounder

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Seychelles, Arabian Gulf, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Philippines, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Silty and sandy areas near reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Small benthic organisms; crustaceans and small invertebrates and small fish. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. Occasionally used as aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

## FAMILY: CAESIONIDAE (FUSILIERS)

### 2 *Caesio caerulaurea* Lacepède, 1801 - Blue and gold fusilier

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 35 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Hong Kong, southern Japan and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Offshore coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling in mid-water above reefs. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. Occasionally used as baitfish in the tuna fishery. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Dipterygnotus balteatus* (Valenciennes, 1830) – Mottled fusilier

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 14 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Seychelles, Arabian Gulf, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Australia and Solomon Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Open coastal waters and offshore coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling near surface, mid-water or at the bottom. Forms tightly packed large aggregations seasonally, called “Red bait balls”. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. Important baitfish in the tuna fishery. **THREATS:** Destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: CAESIONIDAE (FUSILIERS)



**1 *Pterocaesio tile* (Cuvier, 1830) - Dark-banded fusilier**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, South Africa, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Andaman Islands, Bangladesh, Philippines, Ryukyu Islands, southern Japan, Fiji and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling in large aggregations in mid-water over offshore reefs. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. Occasionally used as baitfish in the tuna fishery. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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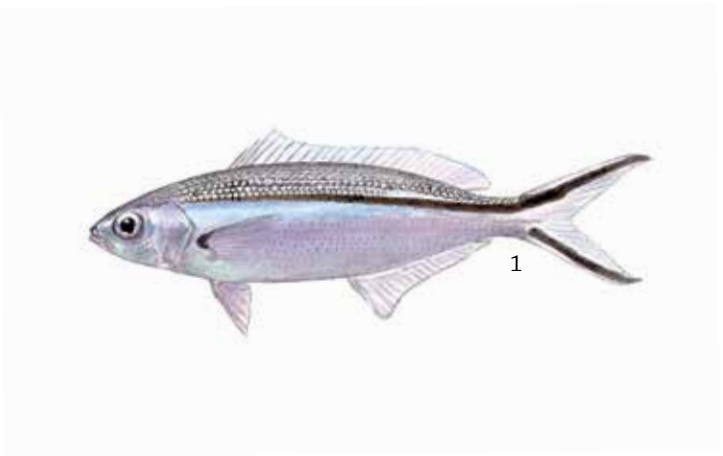
FAMILY: CARANGIDAE (JACKS AND TREVALLIES)

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**2 *Scomberoides commersonnianus* Lacepède, 1801 – Talang queenfish**

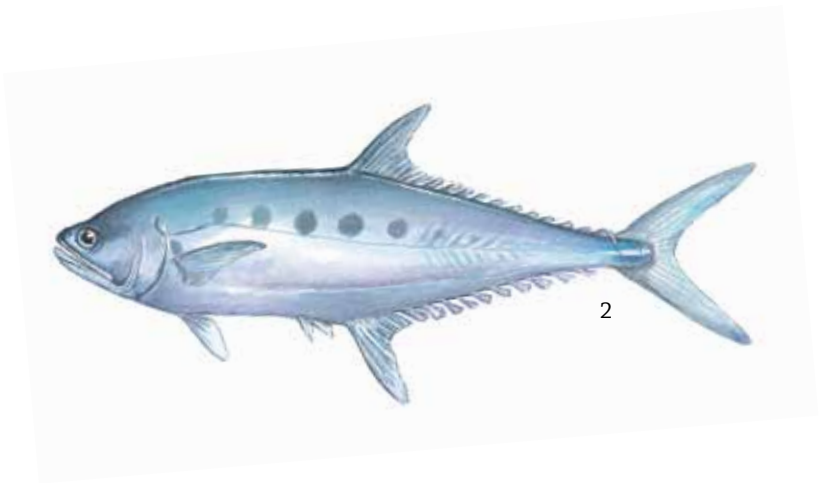
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 120 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Australia and Solomon Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Offshore sandstone and rock reef habitats. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups. Has an extensive home range; roams freely among many reef habitats. Lives in the water column above the reef substrate. **DIET:** Fish. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





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FAMILY: CARANGIDAE (JACKS AND TREVALLIES)



**1 *Triacnodon obesus* (Rüppell, 1837) – Whitetip reef shark**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 215 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, Samoa, Galapagos Islands and Panama. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary; sluggish during daytime but active at night. **DIET:** Fish, crabs, octopus, cuttlefish and other large invertebrates such as lobsters. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish, occasionally used as aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Near Threatened. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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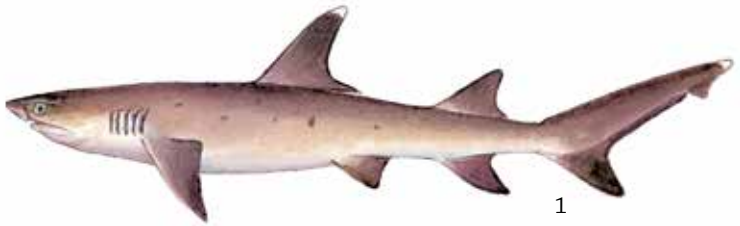
**FAMILY: CENTROPOMIDAE\* (SEA BASSES AND PERCHES)**

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**2 *Psammoperca waigiensis* (Cuvier, 1828) – Waigieu seaperch / Glasseye seaperch**

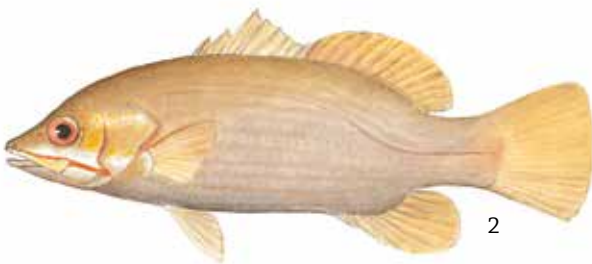
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 47 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Australia and Papua New Guinea. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; common in the northwest. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs and estuaries. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans such as crabs and lobsters. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

\*Please replace with Latidae



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FAMILY: CENTROPOMIDAE\* (SEA BASSES AND PERCHES)



### 1 *Chaetodon citrinellus* Cuvier, 1831 – Speckled butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 13 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, southern Japan, Hawaii, and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Prefers habitats with medium coral cover. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs. **DIET:** Small benthic invertebrates, coral polyps and filamentous algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Chaetodon ephippium* Cuvier, 1831 – Saddled butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Sri Lanka, Hawaii, Polynesia, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but extremely rare. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Small benthic invertebrates, coral polyps and filamentous algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, collection for the aquarium trade and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Chaetodon gardineri* Norman, 1939 – Gardiner's butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 17 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – including Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and Sri Lanka. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs; prefers habitats with low coral cover. **DEPTH RANGE:** 15-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs or small groups. **DIET:** Small benthic invertebrates and coral polyps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Chaetodon guttatissimus* Bennett, 1833 – Peppered butterflyfish

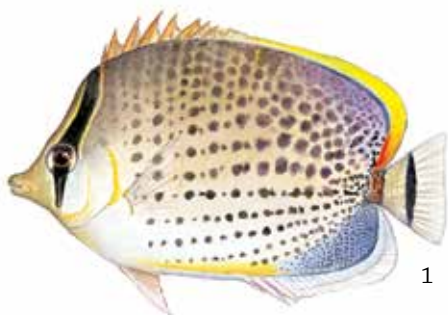
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 12 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Christmas Island, Thailand and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; rare in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone, rock reefs; prefers habitats with medium coral cover. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs. **DIET:** Small benthic invertebrates, coral polyps and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Chaetodon interruptus* Ahl, 1923 – Yellow teardrop butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 20 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including East Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; rare in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral and sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Sponges, hard and soft coral polyps, small benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Chaetodon madagaskariensis* Ahl, 1923 – Seychelles butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 13 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Sri Lanka and Christmas Island. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Sandstone and rock reef; not present in shallow coral habitats. **DEPTH RANGE:** 15-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs. **DIET:** Coral polyps, small benthic invertebrates, shrimps and filamentous algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Chaetodon ornatissimus* Cuvier, 1831 – Ornate butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 20 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Sri Lanka, Hawaii, Marquesas Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but extremely rare; not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Coral polyps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Chaetodon rafflesii* Anonymous [Bennett], 1830 – Latticed butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 18 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Sri Lanka, Tuamotu Archipelago, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In pairs. **DIET:** Hard and soft coral polyps, polychaete worms, and other benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Chaetodon semeion* Bleeker, 1855 – Dotted butterflyfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 26 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Tuamotu Archipelago, Ryukyu Islands and the Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Northwestern and eastern coastal reefs; extremely rare. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Coral polyps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** Protected (under the Fauna and Flora Protection Act and the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act).





### 1 *Hemitaurichthys zoster* (Bennett, 1831) – Black pyramid butterflyfish

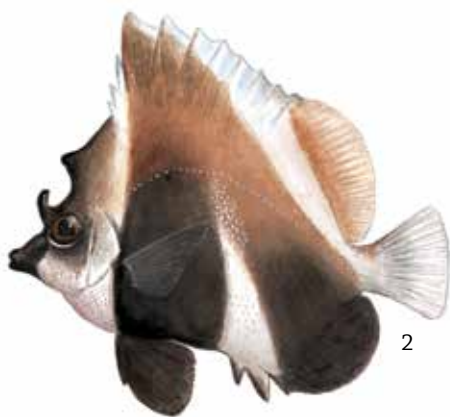
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 18 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, India, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 15-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups. Swim well above the substrate. **DIET:** Zooplankton and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Heniochus pleurotaenia* Ahl, 1923 – Phantom bannerfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 17 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Java. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary, in pairs or small groups. **DIET:** Coral polyps and small benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Heniochus singularius* Smith & Radcliffe, 1911 – Singular bannerfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 25 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Sri Lanka, Samoa, southern Japan and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral Reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-8 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Coral polyps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Cryptocentrus fasciatus* (Playfair, 1867) – Barred shrimp-goby

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 14 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including East Africa, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Andaman Islands, Philippines, Australia and Solomon Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Sandy areas adjacent to reef habitats. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Lives in a hole symbiotically with a shrimp. Retreats into the hole, tail first, at the first sign of danger. **DIET:** Small benthic organisms. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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### FAMILY: HAEMULIDAE (GRUNTS AND SWEETLIPS)

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### 2 *Pomadasys furcatus* (Bloch & Schneider, 1801) – Banded grunter

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 50 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Madagascar, South Africa, Gulf of Aden, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Sandstone and rock reefs, and shipwrecks. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling. **DIET:** Crabs, worms and molluscs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

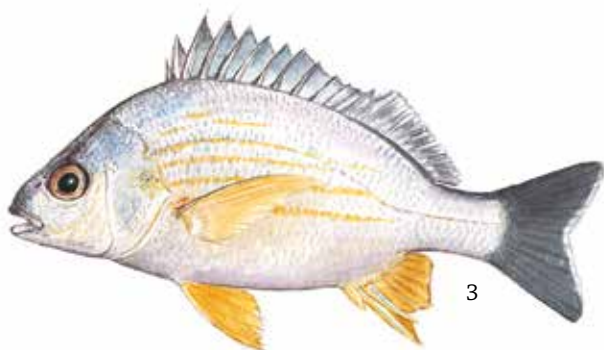
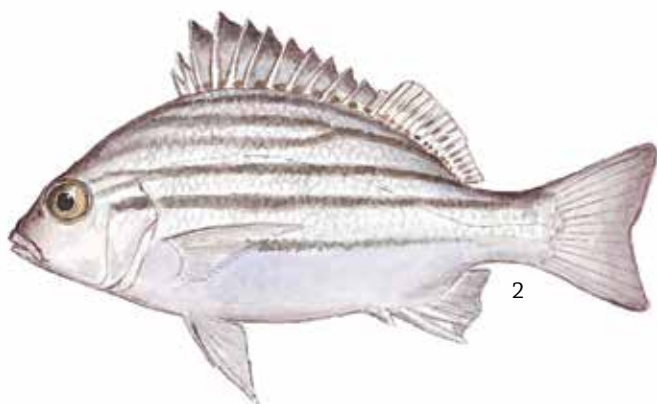
### 3 *Pomadasys guoraca* (Cuvier, 1829) – Silver-grunt

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 45 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka, Andaman Islands and Philippines. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups. **DIET:** Crabs, worms and molluscs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: HAEMULIDAE (GRUNTS AND SWEETLIPS)



**1 *Hyporhamphus dussumieri* (Valenciennes, 1847) – Dussumier’s halfbeak**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 38 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Taiwan, Ryukyu Islands, Fiji and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Near the surface; mainly over offshore reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 0-2 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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**FAMILY: HOLOCENTRIDAE (SQUIRRELFISHES AND SOLDIERFISHES)**

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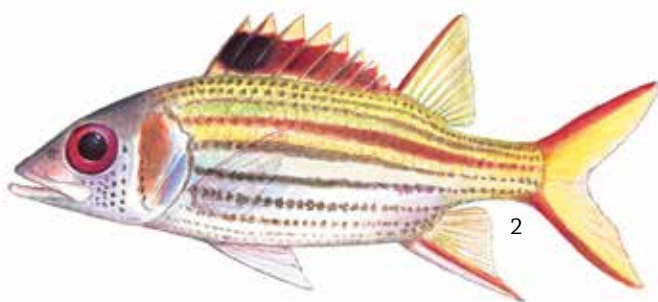
**2 *Neoniphon sammara* (Forsskål, 1775) – Sammara squirrelfish**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 32 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Guam, Hawaii and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups. Mainly nocturnal; during daytime they hide under ledges and in spaces among coral. **DIET:** Small fish, crabs and shrimps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: HOLOCENTRIDAE (SQUIRRELFISHES AND SOLDIERFISHES)



### 1 *Coris aygula* Lacepède, 1801 – Clown coris

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 70 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles are brightly coloured, as illustrated; adults are dark green. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, Oman, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Line Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but extremely rare. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Crustaceans, molluscs and sea urchins. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** Protected under Fauna and Flora Protection Act and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.

### 2 *Epibulus insidiator* (Pallas, 1770) – Sling-jaw wrasse

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 54 cm. **COLOURATION:** Most are brown; some are bright yellow. The head is white coloured in large males as illustrated. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Andaman Islands, Philippines, Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Mainly in the northwest; rare elsewhere. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-8 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Small invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Halichoeres leucoxanthus* Randall & Smith, 1982 – Canarytop wrasse

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 12 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Andaman Islands, Thailand and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Mainly in the northwest; uncommon or rare elsewhere. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 15-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





### 1 *Halichoeres zeylonicus* (Bennett, 1833) – Ceylon wrasse / Goldstripe wrasse

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 20 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, Mauritius, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Australia and Samoa. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs; mainly among coral rubble and weeds. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups dominated by a large male. **DIET:** Small benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Novaculichthys taeniourus* (Lacepède, 1801) – Rockmover wrasse

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles and adults differ, as illustrated. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ryukyu Islands, Hawaii, Australia, Gulf of California, Panama and Galapagos Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs; mainly among coral rubble and weeds. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Juveniles solitary; adults in pairs. Juveniles imitate the swaying motion of algae in their habitat. Moves coral rubble or small rocks when searching for prey. Hides under sand or coral rubble when threatened. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates including small crabs, sea urchins and worms. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Thalassoma purpurum* (Forsskål, 1775) – Surge wrasse

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 46 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Andaman Islands, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Guam, Marshall Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-8 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups dominated by one or more males. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates including brittle stars, sea urchins and molluscs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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## 1 *Monotaxis grandoculis* (Forsskål, 1775) – Bigeye emperor

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 60 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles with dark vertical bands, as illustrated; adults silvery. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 4-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Crabs, worms, tunicates and sea cucumber. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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## FAMILY: LUTJANIDAE (SNAPPERS)

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## 2 *Lutjanus bohar* (Forsskål, 1775) – Two-spot red snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 90 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Marquesas, Ryukyu Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Mostly in groups; occasionally solitary. Forms aggregations during spawning. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans such as crabs and shrimps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: LUTJANIDAE (SNAPPERS)



### 1 *Lutjanus fulviflamma* (Forsskål, 1775) – Dory snapper

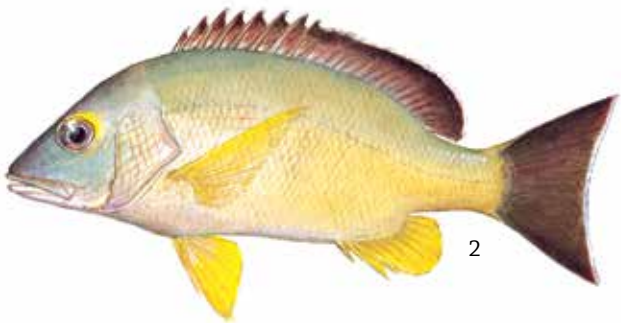
**LENGTH:** Maximum - 35 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, Ryukyu Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs; also ship wrecks. Juveniles are sometimes found in coastal lagoons with seagrass meadows and mangroves. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling or solitary. Forms mixed aggregations with other snappers, especially *Lutjanus kasmira*, *L. quinquilinetus* and *L. lutjanus*. **DIET:** Fish, and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Lutjanus fulvus* (Forster, 1801) – Blacktail snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Marquesas, Southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in aggregations. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Lutjanus gibbus* (Forsskål, 1775) – Humpback red snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 50 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka Southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs; prefers seaward reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 4-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling, occasionally solitary. Large aggregations occur on offshore reefs in the northwest. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Lutjanus lunulatus* (Park, 1797) – Lunartail snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Arabian Sea, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Fish and benthic crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

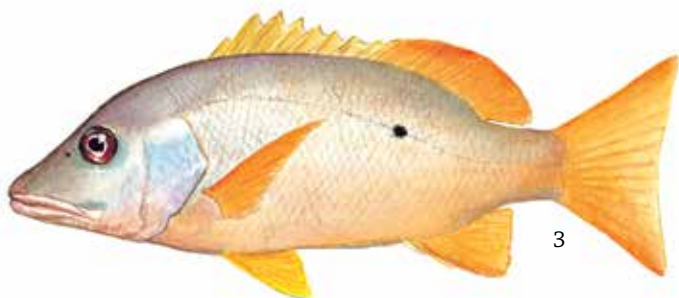
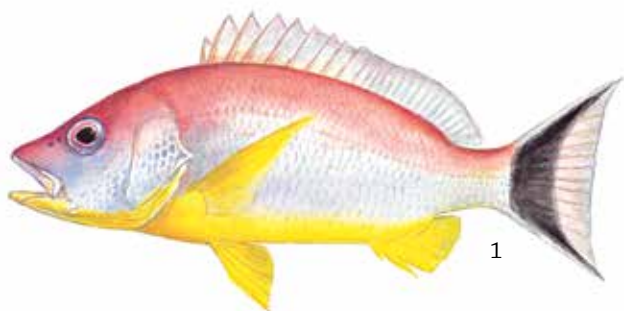
### 2 *Lutjanus lutjanus* Bloch, 1790 – Bigeye snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 35 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands and Tonga. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs; also on ship wrecks. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling, often with other similarly coloured *Lutjanus* species. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Lutjanus monostigma* (Cuvier, 1828) – One-spot snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 60 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Marquesas, Southern Japan to Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans, mainly crabs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



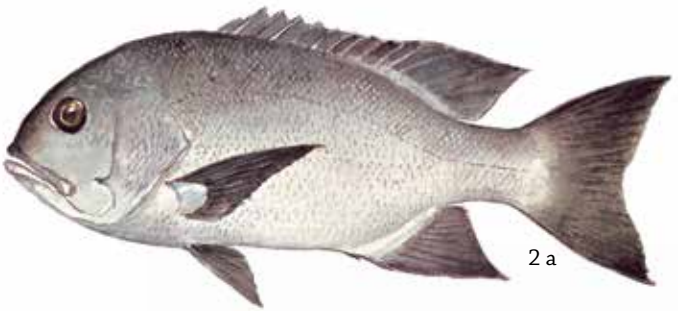


## 1 *Lutjanus sebae* (Cuvier, 1816) – Emperor red snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 60 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles with red and white bands as illustrated. Adults pale red. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific– including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread except in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 10-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in schools. Adults prefer deep reefs below 30 m. Juveniles are found in shallow habitats close to estuaries and lagoons. In Trincomalee Bay, juveniles live among spines of *Diadema setosum* sea urchins for protection. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

## 2 *Macolor niger* (Forsskål, 1775) – Black and white snapper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 75 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Samoa, Southern Japan to Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Uncommon; usually found among eastern and northwestern reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Juveniles solitary, adults in small groups. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium; adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection of juveniles for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

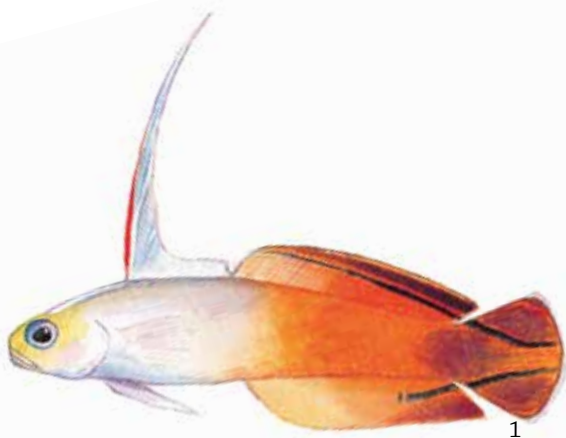


### 1 *Nemateleotris magnifica* Fowler, 1938 – Fire goby

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 9 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Andaman Islands, Hawaii, Pitcairn Islands, Ryukyu Islands, New Caledonia and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Sand and rubble mixed areas adjacent to sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 12-35 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Hovers above the substrate close to the burrow while flicking the long first dorsal fin, back and forth; darts into the burrow at first sign of danger. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Ptereleotris evides* (Jordan & Hubbs, 1925) – Blackfin dartfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 14 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Line Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Sand and rubble mixed areas adjacent to the seaward margin of coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Juveniles in small groups and adults in pairs close to the burrow. Difficult to approach as they move away when disturbed and darts into the burrow if pursued. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Aluterus scriptus* (Osbeck, 1765) – Scribbled leatherjacket filefish

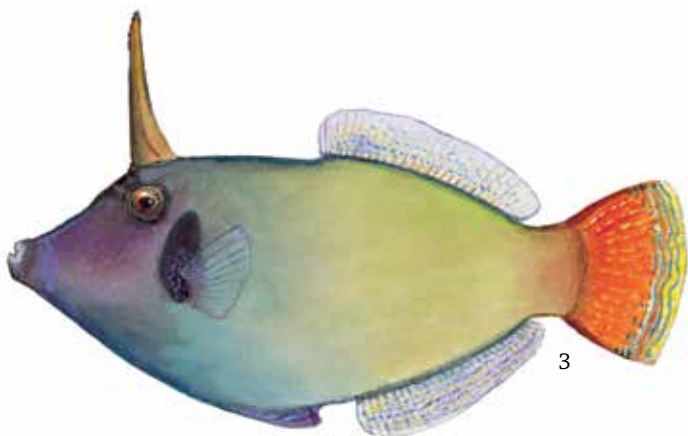
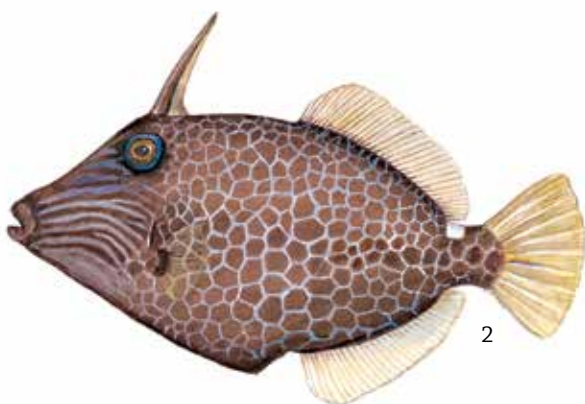
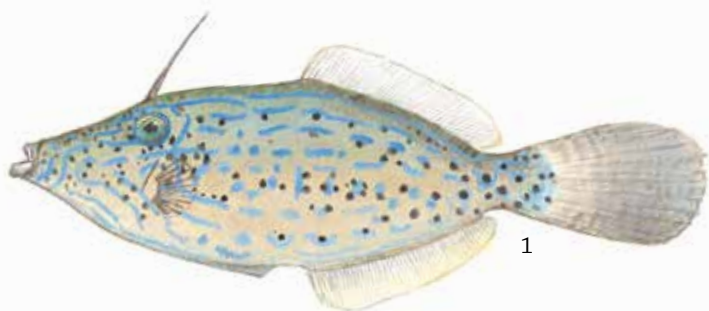
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 75 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Circumtropical. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Juveniles may follow floating seaweed or objects offshore. **DIET:** Algae, Gorgonians, colonial anemones, tunicates and hydrozoans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Cantherhines pardalis* (Rüppell, 1837) – Honeycomb filefish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 25 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Australia and Guam. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; mainly in the east. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Pervagor janthinosoma* (Bleeker, 1854) – Blackbar filefish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 13 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, South Africa, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Ryukyu Islands, Australia and Guam. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; mainly in the east. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Parupeneus barberinus* (Lacepède, 1801) – Dash and dot goatfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 60 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Gulf of Aden, East Africa, Oman, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Line Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Juveniles on seagrass and coral rubble areas; adults on coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Worms, small molluscs, and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

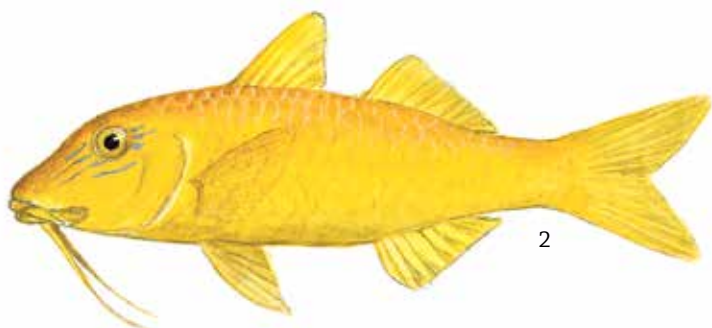
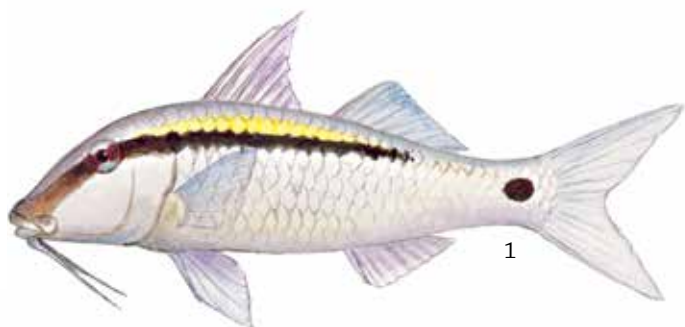
### 2 *Parupeneus cyclostomus* (Lacepède, 1801) – Gold-saddle goatfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 50 cm. **COLOURATION:** There are two colour phases. The dark phase has blue marks on scales and a yellow saddle behind second dorsal fin; yellow phase as illustrated. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Hawaii, Line Islands, Ryukyu Islands and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Juveniles form groups, adults solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Small crustaceans and molluscs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Parupeneus macronema* (Lacepède, 1801) – Long-barbel goatfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Arabian Gulf, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia and Philippines. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Small crustaceans and worms. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





### 1 *Parupeneus trifasciatus* (Lacepède, 1801) – Doublebar goatfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 35 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Madagascar, Oman, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Small crustaceans and worms. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Upeneus tragula* Richardson, 1846 – Freckled goatfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 33 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Small crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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## FAMILY: NEMIPTERIDAE (MONOCLE BREAMS)

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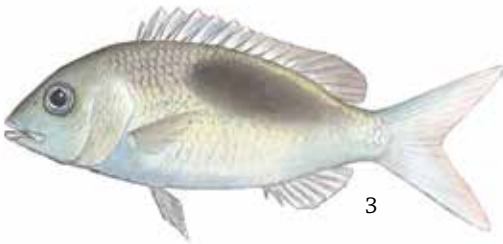
### 3 *Scolopsis bimaculata* Rüppell, 1828 – Thumbprint monocle bream

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 25 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Red Sea, East Africa, Persian Gulf, India, Sri Lanka, Bay of Bengal and Philippines. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. Has a typical swimming behaviour as described under Family Nemipteridae. **DIET:** Molluscs, sea urchins and crustaceans such as crabs and shrimps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: NEMIPTERIDAE (MONOCLE BREAMS)



### 1 *Scolopsis xenochroa* Günther, 1872 – Oblique-barred monocle bream

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 22 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Maldives, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; mainly in the northwest. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 6-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. Has a typical swimming behaviour as described under Family Nemipteridae. **DIET:** Molluscs, sea urchins and crustaceans such as crabs and shrimps. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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### FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE (SNAKE EELS)

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### 2 *Myrichthys maculosus* (Cuvier, 1816) – Spotted snake eel

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 100 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-8 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Burrows into sand when frightened. Mainly nocturnal. **DIET:** Small fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE (SNAKE EELS)



### 1 *Abudefduf bengalensis* (Bloch, 1787) – Bengal sergeant

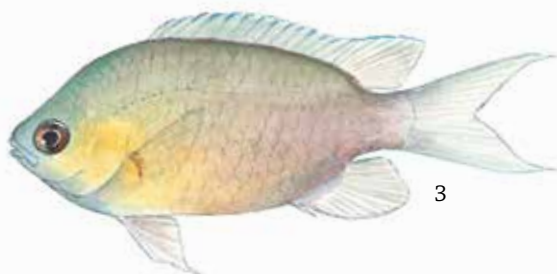
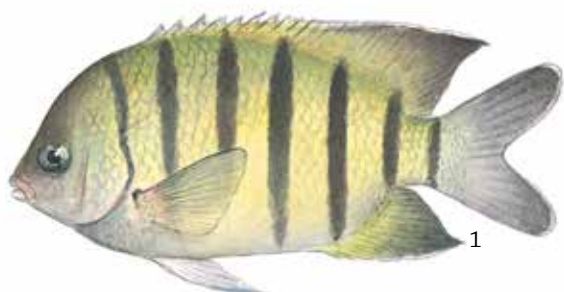
**LENGTH:** Maximum - 17 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean and Western Pacific – including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Restricted to the northern, northwestern and northeastern shallow reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-5 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups that are highly territorial. **DIET:** Algae, gastropods and small crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Chromis atripectoralis* Welander & Schultz, 1951 – Black-axil chromis

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 12 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific including East Africa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tuamotu Archipelago, Ryukyu Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Occurs mainly in the northwestern shallow reefs; uncommon elsewhere. **HABITATS:** Shallow coral reefs with thick growth of branching Staghorn (*Acropora*) corals. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-3 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling; often mixed with *Chromis viridis* aggregations. **DIET:** Planktonic crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Chromis cinerascens* (Cuvier, 1830) – Green puller

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 13 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific including Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and northwestern Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Common on the silty offshore reefs on the west coast. **HABITATS:** Sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups of 10-15 individuals. **DIET:** Zooplankton and benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Chromis dimidiata* (Klunzinger, 1871) - Chocolatedip chromis

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 9 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand. **In Sri Lanka:** Uncommon but widespread. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs, especially on their seaward slopes. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups of 3-4 individuals. **DIET:** Zooplankton and benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

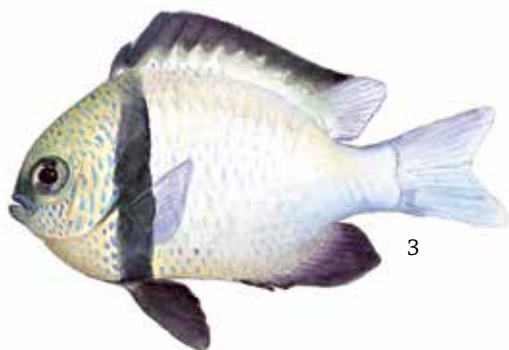
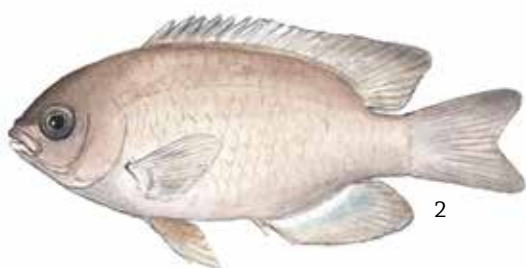
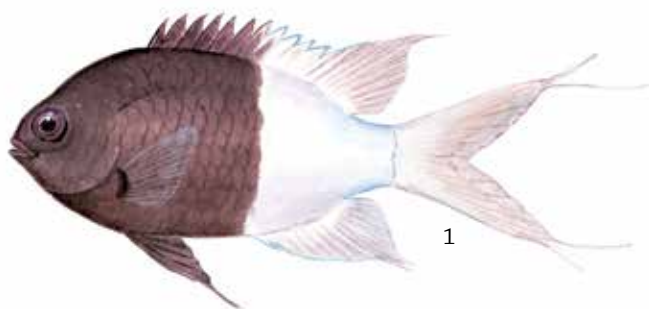
### 2 *Chrysiptera glauca* (Cuvier, 1830) - Grey demoiselle

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 11.5 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific -including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Line Islands, southern Japan, Pitcairn Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Mainly on fringing reefs in southern coastal waters. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs; usually in reef lagoons with coral rubble and sand. **DEPTH RANGE:** 0.5-3 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups at the base of the reef structure. **DIET:** Benthic algae, small crustaceans, molluscs, fish eggs and fish larvae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Dascyllus carneus* Fischer, 1885 - Cloudy dascyllus

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 7 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean - East Africa, Sri Lanka, Andaman Sea, and Java Sea. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs where tabulate *Acropora* and *Pocillopora* corals are present. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Hovers above the corals in small schools. On sensing any threat they dive into the coral and hide among the coral branches. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, over-collection for the aquarium trade and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





### 1 *Neopomacentrus cyanomos* (Bleeker, 1856) – Regal demoiselle

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 10 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread.

**HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Prefers seaward margins of reefs and large coral bommies exposed to strong currents. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-12 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups or large aggregations. **DIET:** Zooplankton and benthic algae.

**ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Occasionally used in aquariums.

**THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN**

**RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Neopomacentrus taeniurus* (Bleeker, 1856) – Freshwater demoiselle

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 10 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including East Africa, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and common. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Also found in harbours and estuaries. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-3

m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups or large aggregations. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Occasionally used in aquariums. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, especially water pollution. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Data Deficient. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Pomacentrus indicus* Allen, 1991 – Indian damsel

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 11 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean –including Andaman Islands, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Chagos. **In Sri Lanka:** Common on inshore reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs; prefers shallow silty reef habitats with coral rubble. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Pomacentrus nagasakiensis* Tanaka, 1917 – Nagasaki damsel

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 11 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups. **DIET:** Primarily zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Pomacentrus philippinus* Evermann & Seale, 1907 – Philippine damsel

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 10 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Ryukyu Islands, Australia and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Common on eastern coastal reefs. **HABITATS:** Coral and sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In small groups. **DIET:** Benthic algae and zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Pomacentrus proteus* Allen, 1991 – Colombo damsel

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 10 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – presently recorded only from Sri Lanka. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Common on western coastal reefs. **HABITATS:** Sandstone, coral and rock reefs. Prefers silty reef habitats with low coral cover. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-10 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Benthic invertebrates and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Stegastes lividus* (Forster, 1801) – Blunt-snout Gregory / Farmer fish

**LENGTH:** Maximum - 16 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Line Islands, Society Islands, Ryukyu Islands and Tonga. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs; especially, among stands of branching Staghorn corals (*Acropora spp.*). **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-3 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Live in groups and establish a colony within a patch of branching Staghorn corals. Known as the “Farmer fish” because they promote the growth of desirable algae by removing undesirable species within their territory. This species is highly aggressive and guards its territory by attacking all intruders, including humans. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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### FAMILY: PRIACANTHIDAE (BIGEYES)

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### 2 *Priacanthus hamrur* (Forsskål, 1775) – Moontail bullseye

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 45 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Australia and Easter Island. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Not recorded in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Offshore coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Usually near or under ledges and caves. **DEPTH RANGE:** 10-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** small fish, crustaceans such as crabs and shrimps, and other benthic invertebrates. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: PRIACANTHIDAE (BIGEYES)



### 1 *Cetoscarus bicolor* (Rüppell, 1829) – Bicolour parrotfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 90 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juvenile, adult males and adult females are differently coloured. All three are illustrated. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Tuamotu Archipelago, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Juveniles among seaweed, seagrass and coral rubble; adults on coral reefs and sandstone reefs with live corals. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups of up to 10 individuals, dominated by a large male. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Hipposcarus harid* (Forsskål, 1775) – Indian Ocean longnose parrotfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 75 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – including Red Sea, Mozambique Channel, Madagascar, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Chagos Archipelago. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In groups dominated by a large male. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Scarus frenatus* Lacepède, 1802 – Bridled parrotfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 45 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Line Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





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### 1 *Scarus ghobban* Forsskål, 1775 - Blue-barred parrotfish

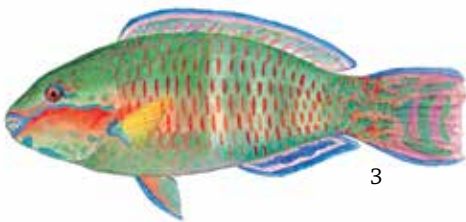
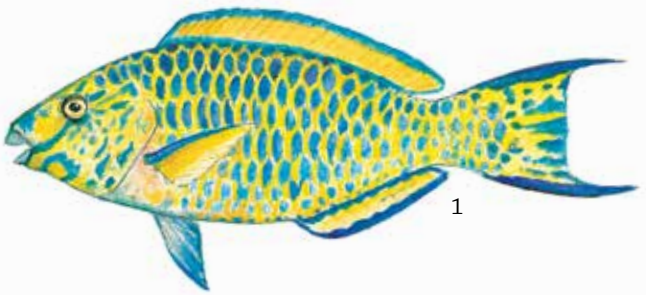
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 90 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Panama, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Juveniles among seaweed, seagrass and coral rubble; adults on coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups dominated by a male. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Scarus niger* Forsskål, 1775 – Dusky parrotfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Society Islands, Ryukyu Islands and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups dominated by a male. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Scarus russelii* Valenciennes, 1840 – Russell's parrotfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 50 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, India, Sri Lanka and Andaman Sea. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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**1 *Scarus viridifucatus* (Smith, 1956) – Roundhead parrotfish**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 45 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – including East Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-15 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. **DIET:** Benthic algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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**FAMILY: SCATOPHAGIDAE (SCATS)**

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**2 *Scatophagus argus* (Linnaeus, 1766) – Spotted scat**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 38 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Australia, Tahiti and Vanuatu. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Estuaries and coastal reefs near rivers and canals. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-3 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In large aggregations. **DIET:** Worms, crustaceans and algae. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish; adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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**FAMILY: SCOMBRIDAE (MACKERELS)**

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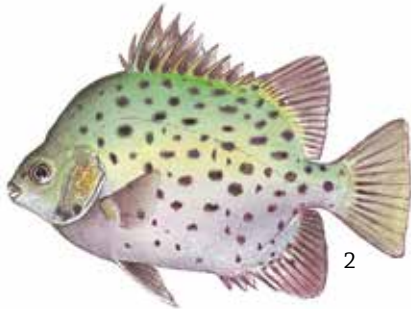
**3 *Rastrelliger kanagartha* (Cuvier, 1816) – Indian mackerel**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 38 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Ryukyu Islands, Australia and Samoa. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** In coastal waters with high plankton concentrations and seasonally on offshore reef habitats. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** In schools; all individuals in the school move with their mouths wide open when feeding. **DIET:** Macroplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Data Deficient. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: SCATOPHAGIDAE (SCATS)



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FAMILY: SCOMBRIDAE (MACKERELS)



### 1 *Aethaloperca rogaa* (Forsskål, 1775) – Redmouth grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 60 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; uncommon in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Under ledges and in caves and crevices. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Data Deficient. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Diploprion bifasciatum* Cuvier, 1828 – Barred soapfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 25 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Prefers offshore sandstone reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. Secretes a toxin when stressed. **DIET:** Fish. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are occasionally used as aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Epinephelus coeruleopunctatus* (Bloch, 1790) – Whitespotted grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 75 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including East Africa, Arabian Gulf, Sri Lanka, southern Japan, New Caledonia and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone, rock reefs and shipwrecks. Juveniles are found in coastal lagoons. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-25 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Epinephelus fasciatus* (Forsskål, 1775) – Blacktip grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 40 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Marquesas Islands, Pitcairn Islands, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef.

**In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. Common in the Gulf of Mannar.

**HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5–20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern.

**PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

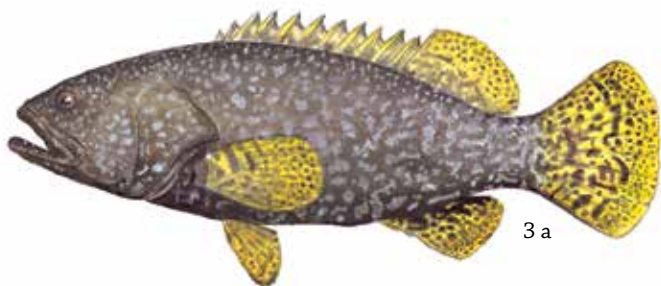
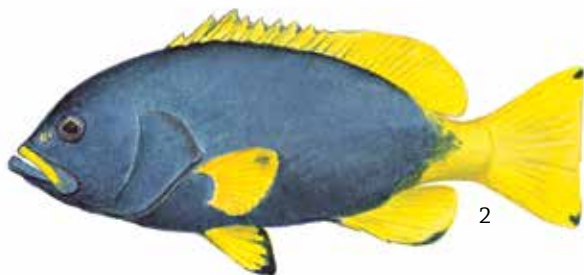
### 2 *Epinephelus flavocaeruleus* (Lacepède, 1802) – Blue-and-yellow grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 90 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles are bright blue and yellow; adults are grey, with or without yellow patches. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indian Ocean – including Gulf of Aden, East Africa, Mauritius, Arabian Gulf, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Sumatra. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but rare. Not recorded from Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reef. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8–50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None. Export prohibited under Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.

### 3 *Epinephelus lanceolatus* (Bloch, 1790) – Giant grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 270 cm. **COLOURATION:** Juveniles and sub-adults have yellow markings; adults are uniformly grey. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, Hawaii, Pitcairn Islands, southern Japan, New Caledonia and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but rare. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Juveniles in coastal lagoons and inshore reefs; adults in deep offshore reefs and shipwrecks. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3–50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. In caves and under ledges. **DIET:** Fish including small sharks and rays, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection of juveniles for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Vulnerable. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None. Export prohibited under Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.





### 1 *Epinephelus tukula* Morgans, 1959 – Potato grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 200 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, southern Japan and Great Barrier Reef. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread and uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone, rock reefs and shipwrecks. Prefers deep offshore reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 8-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. In caves and under ledges; has a tendency to follow divers. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 2 *Grammistes sexlineatus* (Thunberg, 1792) – Goldenstriped soapfish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, Sri Lanka, southern Japan and New Caledonia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary and secretive. Always near small caves and under ledges. Secretes a toxin when stressed. **DIET:** Fish. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Plectropomus laevis* (Lacepède, 1801) – Blacksaddled coral grouper

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 85 cm. **COLOURATION:** Yellow areas turn brown or dark grey on maturation. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including South Africa, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Tuamoto Archipelago, Ryukyu Islands, New Caledonia and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. Not reported from Palk Bay and Palk Strait. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Juveniles among shallow coral reefs and adults on offshore reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-20 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary and secretive. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Vulnerable. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



### 1 *Variola louti* (Forsskål, 1775) – Yellow-edged lyretail

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 80 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Pitcairn Islands, southern Japan and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but uncommon. Not recorded from Palk Bay and Palk Strait.

**HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. Prefers offshore deep reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 12-40 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary and secretive. **DIET:** Fish and crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish and adults are food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and over-collection for the aquarium trade. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Least Concern. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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### FAMILY: SPHYRAENIDAE (BARRACUDAS)

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### 2 *Sphyraena barracuda* (Edwards, 1771) – Great barracuda

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 180 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the tropical Indo-Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Not present in the Eastern Pacific. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs, and shipwrecks. Juveniles enter estuaries. **DEPTH RANGE:** 3-100 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in small groups. Usually harmless, but may attack if provoked. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans, cuttlefish and squid. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

### 3 *Sphyraena jello* Cuvier, 1829 – Pickhandle barracuda

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 150 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including the Red Sea, East Africa, South Africa, Seychelles, India, Sri Lanka, Andaman Islands, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, Fiji and Solomon Islands. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs, and estuaries. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in groups. **DIET:** Fish and squid. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: SPHYRAENIDAE (BARRACUDAS)



### 1 *Sphyraena obtusata* Cuvier, 1829 – Obtuse barracuda

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 55 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Ryukyu Islands and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs, and shipwrecks. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Schooling. **DIET:** Fish and squid. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and overfishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

## FAMILY: STEGOSTOMATIDAE (ZEBRA SHARKS)

### 2 *Stegostoma fasciatum* (Hermann, 1783) – Zebra shark

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 300 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-West Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Philippines, Samoa, Tonga and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread but very rare. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 5-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Fish, crustaceans and molluscs. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Juveniles are aquarium fish; adults food fish. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Vulnerable. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

## FAMILY: SYNGNATHIDAE (SEAHORSES AND PIPEFISHES)

### 3 *Corythoichthys flavofasciatus* (Rüppell, 1838) – Network pipefish / Yellow-banded pipefish

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 12 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Red Sea, East Africa, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Japan, Guam and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; common in the north and northeast. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone, rock reefs close to shore as well as among coral rubble and rocks with algae. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-5 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Small benthic crustaceans. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Not Evaluated. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.



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FAMILY: STEGOSTOMATIDAE (ZEBRA SHARKS)



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FAMILY: SYNGNATHIDAE (SEAHORSES AND PIPEFISHES)



**1 *Hippocampus kuda* Bleeker, 1852 – Spotted seahorse**

**LENGTH:** Maximum – 30 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Indo-Pacific – including Mauritius, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, southern Japan, Hawaii, Samoa and Australia. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread; mainly in the north and northwest. **HABITATS:** Seagrass meadows, fringing and offshore reefs. May occur on gorgonians and whip corals in relatively deep water. **DEPTH RANGE:** 1-30 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary or in pairs. **DIET:** Zooplankton. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Aquarium fish and in traditional Chinese medicine. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation, destructive fishing and collection for the aquarium trade and medicinal use. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Vulnerable. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.

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FAMILY: TORPEDINIDAE (ELECTRIC RAYS)

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**2 *Torpedo sinuspersici* Olfers, 1831 – Variable torpedo ray**

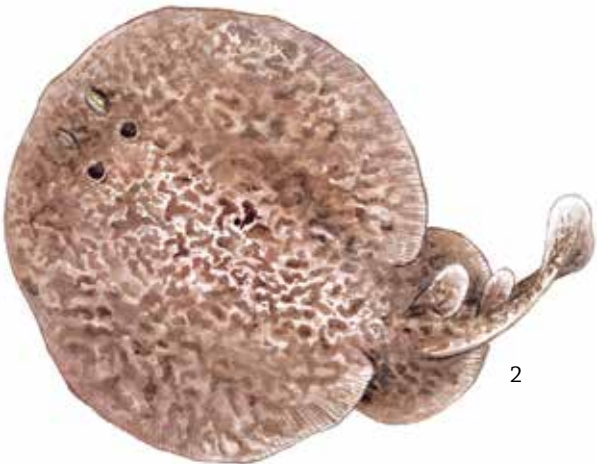
**LENGTH:** Maximum – 130 cm. **DISTRIBUTION:** Western Indian Ocean – including Red Sea, South Africa, Madagascar, India and Sri Lanka. **In Sri Lanka:** Widespread. **HABITATS:** Coral, sandstone and rock reefs. **DEPTH RANGE:** 2-50 m. **BEHAVIOUR:** Solitary. **DIET:** Fish. **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** None. **THREATS:** Habitat degradation and destructive fishing. **IUCN RED LIST STATUS:** Data Deficient. **PROTECTED STATUS IN SRI LANKA:** None.





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FAMILY: TORPEDINIDAE (ELECTRIC RAYS)



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## About Mangroves for the Future

Mangroves for the Future (MFF) is a unique partner-led initiative to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development. Co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP, MFF provides a platform for collaboration among the many different agencies, sectors and countries which are addressing challenges to coastal ecosystem and livelihood issues. The goal is to promote an integrated ocean-wide approach to coastal management and to building the resilience of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities.

MFF builds on a history of coastal management interventions before and after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. It initially focused on the countries that were worst affected by the tsunami — India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Thailand. More recently it has expanded to include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan and Viet Nam.

Mangroves are the flagship of the initiative, but MFF is inclusive of all types of coastal ecosystems, such as coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, sandy beaches, sea grasses and wetlands.

The MFF grants facility offers small, medium and large grants to support initiatives that provide practical, hands-on demonstrations of effective coastal management in action. Each country manages its own MFF programme through a National Coordinating Body which includes representation from government, NGOs and the private sector.

MFF addresses priorities for long-term sustainable coastal ecosystem management which include, among others: climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, promotion of ecosystem health, development of sustainable livelihoods, and active engagement of the private sector in developing sustainable business practices. The emphasis is on generating knowledge, empowering local communities and advocating for policy solutions that will support best practice in integrated coastal management.

Moving forward, MFF will increasingly focus on building resilience of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities by promoting nature based solutions and by showcasing the climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits that can be achieved with healthy mangrove forests and other types of coastal vegetation.

MFF is funded by SIDA, NORAD and Danida.

Learn more at: [www.mangrovesforthefuture.org](http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org)

