

Myripristis jacobus (Blackbar Soldierfish)

Family: Holocentridae (Squirrelfish)

Order: Beryciformes (Night Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Blackbar soldierfish, *Myripristis jacobus*.

[<http://www.lifeintheseas.com/blackbar1.html>, downloaded 18 October 2016]

TRAITS. The blackbar soldierfish is bright red in colour and has thin white edges on the fins (Live Aquaria, 1997). Their eyes are large (Fig. 1), to enable them to see in the water at night when they are searching for food (Petcha, 2016). There is a black bar situated behind the gills, hence its name blackbar soldierfish. The maximum this species can grow in length is 25cm, however they usually do not grow larger than about 20cm (Georgia Aquarium, 2016). Both the male and female look alike, and when threatened they may change colour. The blackbar soldierfish is also known as the big-eye soldierfish (Whatsthatfish, 2016).

DISTRIBUTION. This fish can found in Trinidad and Tobago and is widespread in the Caribbean Sea and the West Indies, the western Atlantic from North Carolina to the Bahamas and Gulf of

Mexico to south Brazil (Wikipedia, 2016). They also occur in the eastern Atlantic from Cape Verde islands, St. Helena and Principe and West Africa (Fig. 2) (Petcha, 2016).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. The blackbar soldierfish can be found in marine habitats, in coral reefs and in deeper waters of depth 2-30m. Even though this range is preferred by the fish, they have also been spotted in offshore waters of depth 100m. They are also found in dark places in lagoons and in the crevices and holes in coral reefs; this is because they are nocturnal. During the day they stay in reefs and in dark places and try to stay hidden while the other species of fish feed, and during the night they come out to feed on zooplankton and shrimps (Whatsthatfish, 2016). Their large eyes help them locate food during the night. This reduces competition for food between the different types of fish living in the reef (Petcha, 2016). The blackbar soldierfish is oviparous, meaning that it produces eggs which are fertilized externally (Georgia Aquarium, 2016); the eggs are produced in open shallow waters on days after the moon is full (Encyclopedia, 2016).

BEHAVIOUR. Most of the time these fish are found by themselves however sometimes they are seen swimming with a school of their kind (Fig. 3). They are also seen swimming upside down at times, in a crevice. When the male and female fish are mating, they make a grunting or clicking sound, produced from the swim bladder. They also place their tails together and fan out their heads to either side. The grunting and clicking sounds are also made when they are under some type of stress (Encyclopedia, 2016). They sometimes quarrel with other species of fish who have entered one of their desired hiding places in the coral reef (Petcha, 2016).

APPLIED BIOLOGY. This species of fish is often seen in a home aquarium, however they do not breed in these conditions (Petcha, 2016). The blackbar soldierfish is listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, hence it is not an endangered or threatened species (IUCN, 2016).

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Fig. 2. Blackbar soldierfish geographic distribution.

[http://www.aquamaps.org/receive.php?type_of_map=regular, downloaded 27 October 2016]



Fig. 3. Blackbar soldierfish swimming in a school.

[<http://www.fishbase.org/Photos/PicturesSummary.php?StartRow=0&ID=1063&what=species&TotRec=7>,
downloaded 27 October 2016]

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