

New Singapore record of the dwarf velvetfish, *Acanthosphex leurynnis*

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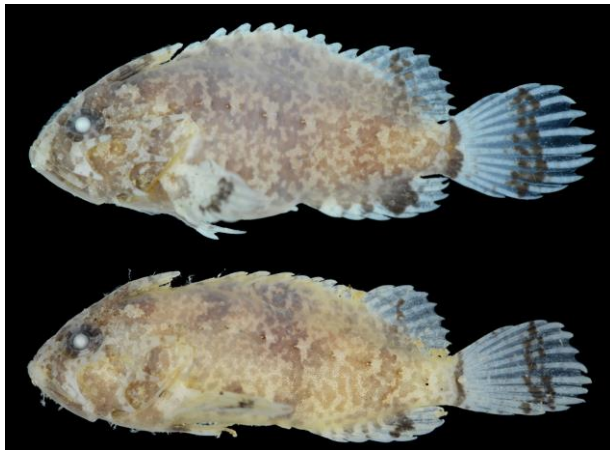
Subjects: Dwarf velvetfish, *Acanthosphex leurynnis* (Teleostei: Scorpaeniformes: Aploactinidae).

Subjects identified by: Tan Heok Hui.

Location and date: Singapore Island, Changi Beach; 19 January 2004.

Habitat: Estuarine. Exposed intertidal shore with sand and silt substrate.

Observer: Tan Heok Hui.



Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

Observation: Two specimens were recently identified from among preserved fishes collected some 15 years ago, and deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore. They are catalogued as ZRC 60879. Lateral views of the two specimens are illustrated in the attached picture.

The observer remembers having collected these two specimens together in a tidepool with a small handnet during low tide. The specimen at the top is 15.2 mm standard length (snout tip to base of caudal fin), the other is 14.9 mm standard length.

Remarks: This appears to be the first record of *Acanthosphex leurynnis* from Singapore (see Fowler, 1938). It can be told apart from other velvetfishes in the East Indian region with a combination of the following features: gill membranes broadly united to the isthmus, body compressed, few velvety prickles on the skin, a pair of short tentacles on the chin, dorsal fin rays XI-XV (first 3 spines separate from remainder of fin) 7-9, anal fin rays I-II 6-8, lacrimal with two large spines, rear margin of the preopercle with four large spines, colour pattern highly variable but pectoral and caudal fins with an irregular dark-brown band across the middle to outer section (Poss, 1999: 2355; Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 251). This species reaches a maximum size of about 3 cm total length, and occurs in rubble near reefs at depths from 5 to 60 m at a few locations in the Indo-west Pacific between India and northern Australia and Hong Kong (Allen & Erdmann, 2012: 251).

Acanthosphex leurynnis can be easily overlooked because of its tiny size and cryptic colouration. The featured specimens were initially dismissed as young juveniles of the longspine waspfish (*Paracentropogon longispinis*, family Tetrarogidae) which is common in the same area.

References:

- Allen, G. R. & M. V. Erdmann, 2012. *Reef Fishes of the East Indies. Volume I*. Tropical Reef Research, Perth, Australia. xiii + 424 pp.
- Fowler, H. W., 1938. A list of the fishes known from Malaya. *Fisheries Bulletin*. 1: 1-268.
- Poss, S. G., 1999. Aploactinidae. Velvetfishes. In: Carpenter, K. E. & Niem, V. H. (eds.). *FAO Species Identification Guide for Fishery Purposes. The Living Marine Resources of the Western Central Pacific. Vol. 4. Bony fishes part 2 (Mugilidae to Carangidae)*. FAO, Rome. p. 2354- 2358.