

Lobotes surinamensis (Tripletail)

Family: Lobotidae (Tripletail)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*.

[<http://fishesofaustralia.net.au/home/species/539> downloaded 27 October 2016]

TRAITS. The tripletail *Lobotes surinamensis*, also known as the black perch, rockfish or buoy-fish, is the sole member of the family Lobotidae, as it possesses many characteristics that make this marine fish unique. It typically weighs about 1-7kg, with a maximum of 18.6kg, and a length of 35-110cm. The tripletail is a flat, oval-shaped fish with small eyes and a curved head, which gets deeper as they develop (Fig. 1). One distinctive trait, which results in the name tripletail, is due to its dorsal and anal fins which face towards the caudal fin, which appears as one three-lobed fin. The adult tripletail is black, grey and brown or bronze. Juvenile tripletails are yellow with dark spots and white fins and clear colour at end of tail (Fig. 2).

DISTRIBUTION. *L. surinamensis* is widely distributed in tropical and subtropical waters, in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, including the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas (Fig. 3).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. Juvenile tripletails can be found near floating *Sargassum* algae, whereas adults are abundant near wrecked ships, jetties and other objects in waters up to 70m deep. They can live up to about 10 years. Spawning occurs offshore or near the coast. Females release eggs and males release sperm during the summer for fertilization;

during this season eggs are released every 3-5 days (Brown-Peterson and Franks, 2001). Female tripletails are able to reproduce when 1 or 2 years old. Larval tripletails go through four stages: Stage 1; preflexion, the larva is not fully developed and is barely pigmented. Stage 2; flexion, pigments spread a little more and the spine on the head is shrinking. Stage 3; post flexion, pigments spread more, head spine greatly decreased, and developing more spines along the body. Stage 4; transformation; fins fully developed and pigments all over the body, to form the juvenile.

BEHAVIOUR. Juvenile *L. surinamensis* are seen floating at the water surface on their sides, appearing similar to floating leaves (Fig. 4). This is a feeding method for attracting small fish or invertebrates, they lie still until prey comes near. Adults can be found either singly or in a school of the same species. It is said to swim at a very slow speed; unlike other fish which swim away rapidly if disturbed, it darts off in a sluggish motion.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. It is not listed as endangered (IUCN, 2015), there is no known threat to the species and no conservation action has been implemented. It is hunted for recreation by fishermen and marketed.

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. Juvenile tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis*.

[<https://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/discover/species-profiles/lobotes-surinamensis/>, downloaded 28 October 2016]

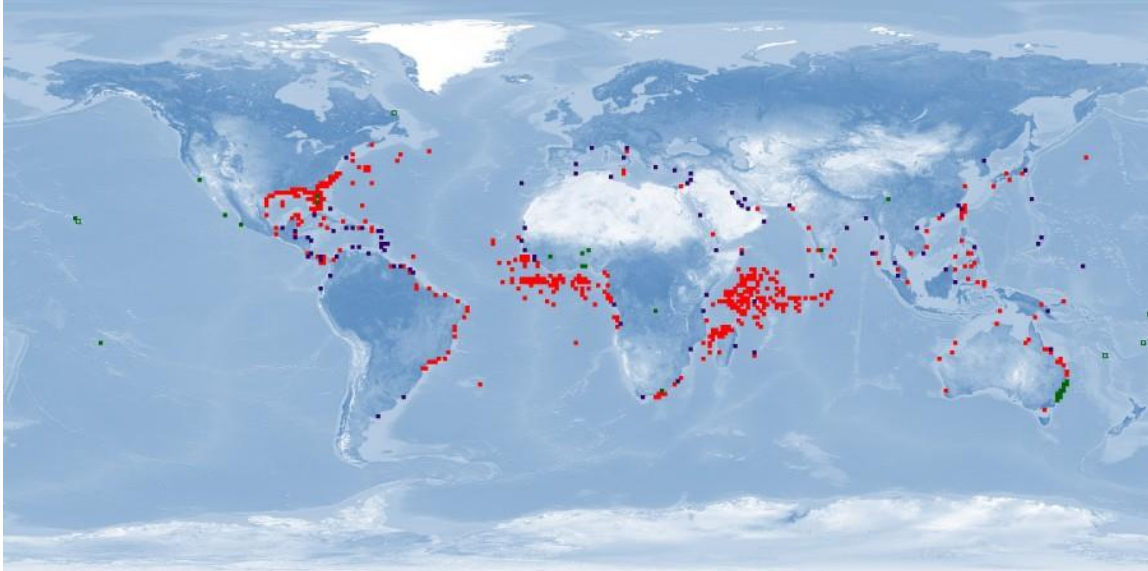


Fig. 3. Distribution map of *Lobotes surinamensis*.

[http://www.aquamaps.org/receive.php?type_of_map=regular, downloaded 22 October 2016]



Fig. 4. Juvenile *Lobotes surinamensis* at the surface, like a floating leaf.

[<http://zukan.com/fish/leaf22971>, downloaded 27 October 2016]

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