



Marine Species Local to Hong Kong

As of August 2025 114e HK Reef Fish

Created by Ameer Thakur



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Hong Kong Grouper

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scientific name: *epinephelus akaara*

Description (looks):

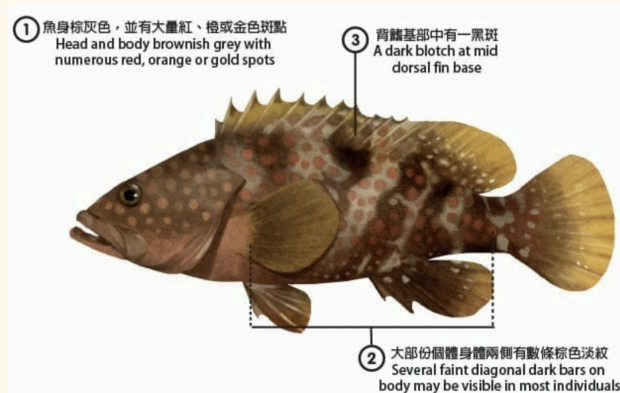
- Head and body brownish grey with numerous red, orange or gold spots.
- Several faint diagonal dark bars on body may be visible in most individuals.
- A dark blotch at mid dorsal fin base.

Interesting facts:

- Maximum recorded age is 19 years.
- Females can change sex to male, but males are found to change sex back to female under a laboratory environment.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Used to be very common in Hong Kong's eastern waters in the 1960s. It is now a rare species.



● 未評估 Not Evaluated (NE)	● 數據缺乏 Data Deficient (DD)
● 無危 Least Concern (LC)	● 近危 Near Threatened (NT)
● 易危 Vulnerable (VU)	● 瀕危 Endangered (EN)
● 極危 Critically Endangered (CR)	● 絕滅 Extinct (EX)





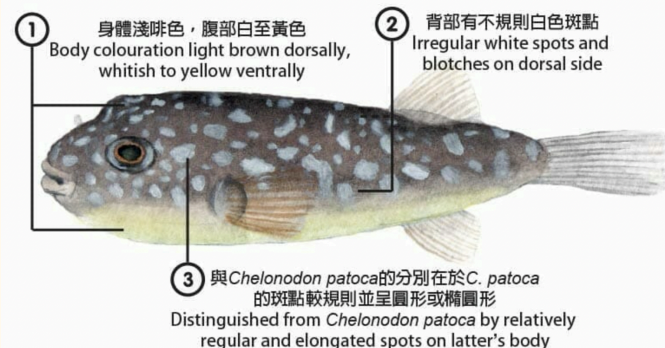
Hong Kong Pufferfish

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scientific name: *takifugu alboplumbeus*

Description (looks):

- Body colouration light brown dorsally, whitish to yellow ventrally.
- Irregular white spots and blotches on dorsal side.
- Distinguished from *Chelonodon patoca* (milk-spotted pufferfish) by relatively regular and elongated spots on latter's body.



Interesting facts:

- Can be found buried in sand with only the eyes and small parts of body exposed.
- Poisonous species. The flesh, liver, ovaries, testes, skin and intestine are reported to be toxic.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Spawning season in Hong Kong reported from December to February.

NE DD LC NT VU EN CR EX



未評估
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數據缺乏
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絕滅
Extinct (EX)





Hong Kong Butterflyfish

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scientific name: *Chaetodon wiebeli*

Description (looks):

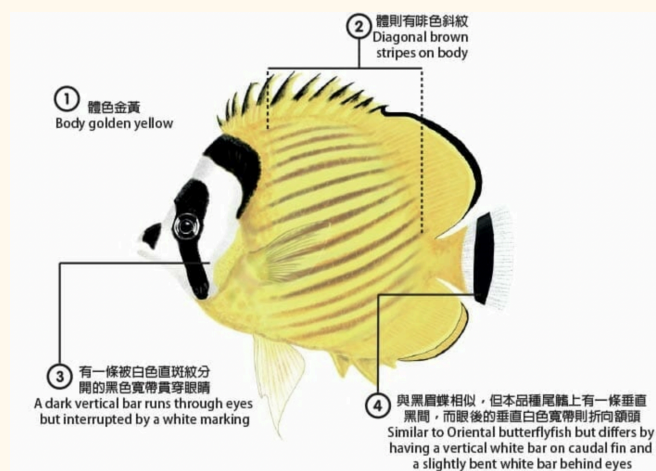
- Body golden yellow.
- Diagonal brown stripes on body.
- A dark vertical bar runs through eyes but interrupted by a white marking.

Interesting facts:

- They have had the same partner all their lives (monogamous).
- They can be found at depths of 4 to 25 metres (13 to 82 ft).

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Occur in rocky and coral reef areas, where they are found in pairs and small groups.



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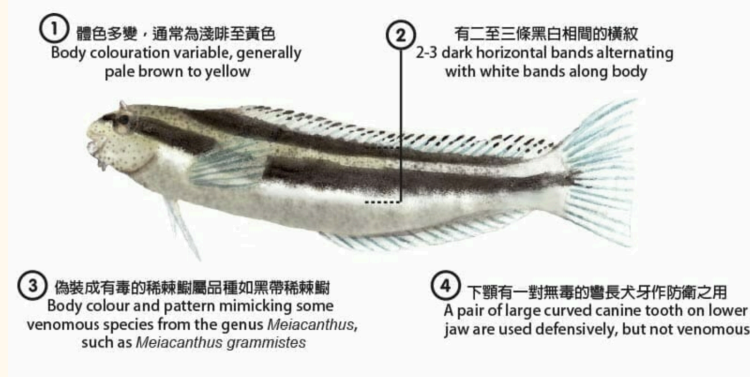
Striped Poison-Fang Blenny Mimic

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scientific name: *petrosirtes breviceps*

Description (looks):

- Body colouration variable, generally pale brown to yellow.
- 2 – 3 dark horizontal bands alternating with white bands along body.
- A pair of large curved canine tooth on lower jaw are used defensively, but not venomous.



Interesting facts:

- Despite looking like it has fangs and being able to bite, it is not venomous.
- It gets its name from its ability to mimic the appearance of the more dangerous fang blenny, gaining protection from predators who avoid the venomous fish.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Mostly observed singly, sheltering in crevices, floating seaweed and abandoned glass bottles or cans. Occasionally observed in groups, distributed along mooring ropes, chains or floating lines.



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Spotted Eagle Ray

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scientific name: *aetobatus narinari*

Description (looks):

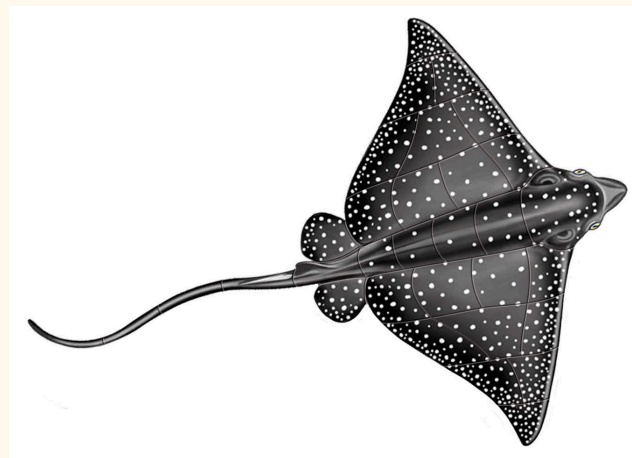
- Dorsally black, grey, greenish or bluish with numerous white or pale blue spots.
- Pectoral fins triangular.
- Tail long and black with several spines.

Interesting facts:

- Spotted eagle rays have venomous spines on their tails, behind the dorsal fin. They are used for defence.
- The silvertip shark is a predator of the spotted eagle ray.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Once recorded in Victoria Harbour in 1930s, no photos of it in Hong Kong.



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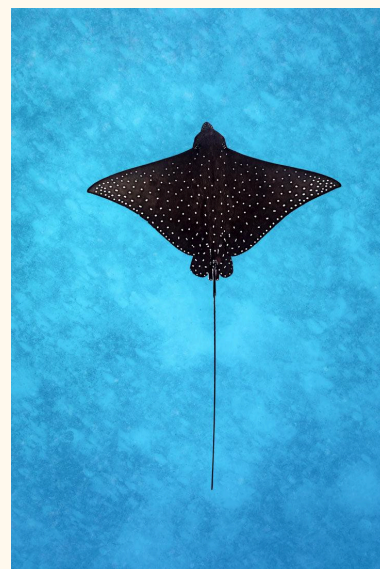
極危
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Striped Eel Catfish

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scientific name: *Plotosus lineatus*

Description (looks):

- Body brown to black dorsally and white ventrally.
- Two white stripes run from lips to tail on each side of the body.
- Four pairs of barbels on head, giving a whiskered appearance.



Interesting facts:

- Possesses three venomous spines: one on dorsal fin and the others on pectoral fins.
- Adults recorded singly and in small groups. Juveniles often form schools, which may look like a large, moving ball as they swim together. Schools may sometimes comprise more than 100 individuals.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In Hong Kong, its sting has resulted in hospitalisation.

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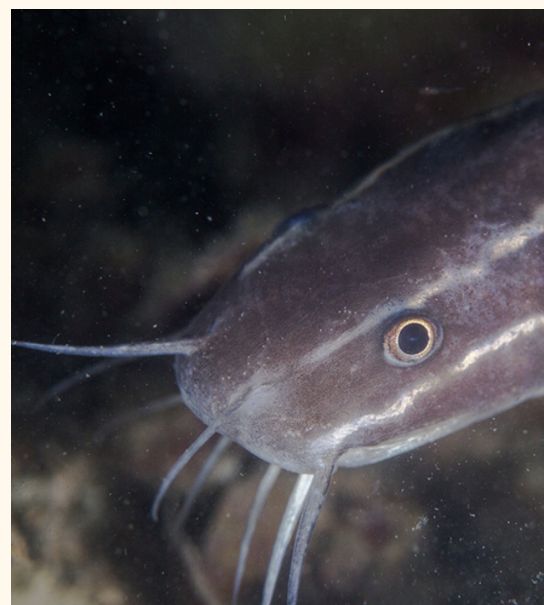
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Bartail Flathead

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scientific name: *platycephalus indicus*

Description (looks):

- Head and body greyish brown with grey mottling and black dots.
- Ventrally yellow.
- Caudal fins truncate with a horizontal yellow stripe near the middle. Upper and lower lobes with black and white stripes.



Interesting facts:

- Often observed lying motionless in sandy bottoms and partially buried in sand.
- Bartail flatheads are ambush predators, using their camouflage to blend with the substrate and then quickly engulf prey

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- The peak spawning season for this species in Hong Kong is from October to February.



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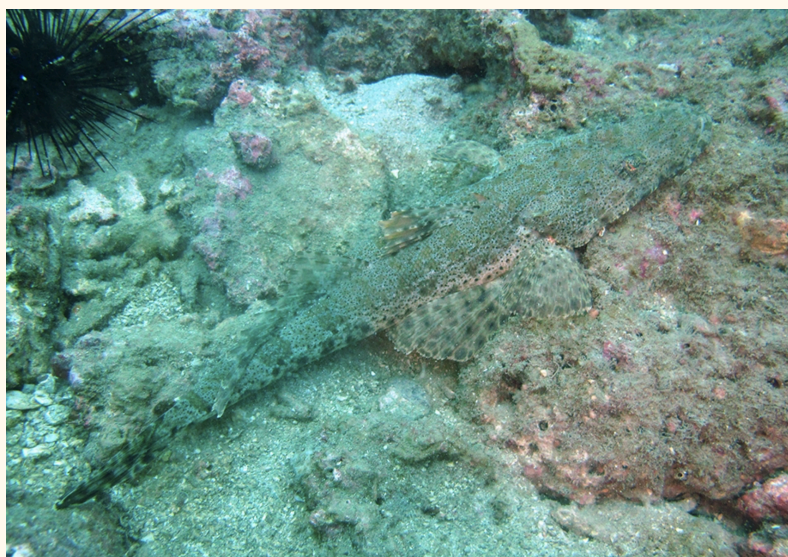
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Honeycomb Grouper

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scientific name: *epinephelus merra*

Description (looks):

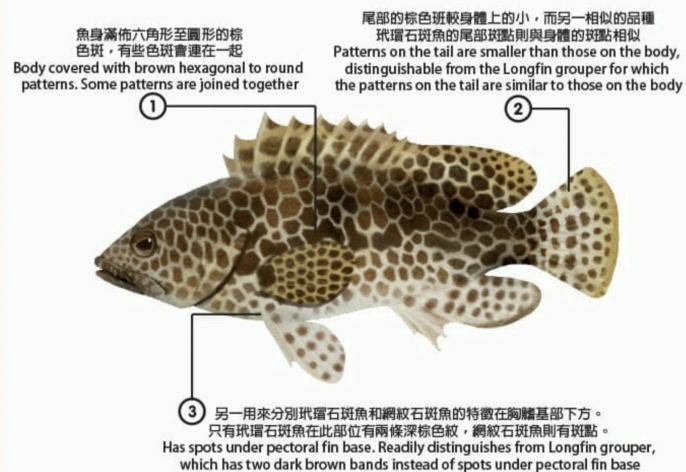
- Covered with brown hexagonal to round patterns.
- Patterns on the tail are smaller than those on the body.
- Has spots under pectoral fin base.

Interesting facts:

- Females can change sex to male at 3 – 5 years old.
- Species was intentionally introduced into the Hawaiian Islands in the 1950s, however, the species did not successfully colonise the area.

Presence and State in Hong Kong:

- In Hong Kong, home range is approximately 48m².



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Japanese Shrimpgoby

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scientific name: *amblyeleotris japonica*

Description (looks):

- Body pale, creamy-whitish with several vertical brown bars and bright blue lines on face and pelvic fins.
- A 'C'-shaped brown mark on caudal fin.
- First dorsal fin triangular.



Interesting facts:

- Egg mass of the species contains around twenty thousand eggs.
- They are generally shy and may retreat into their burrows when approached.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Found to spend most of their time near the entrance of the burrow during the day, and movements were limited to an area of about 3 m in radius from the entrance.



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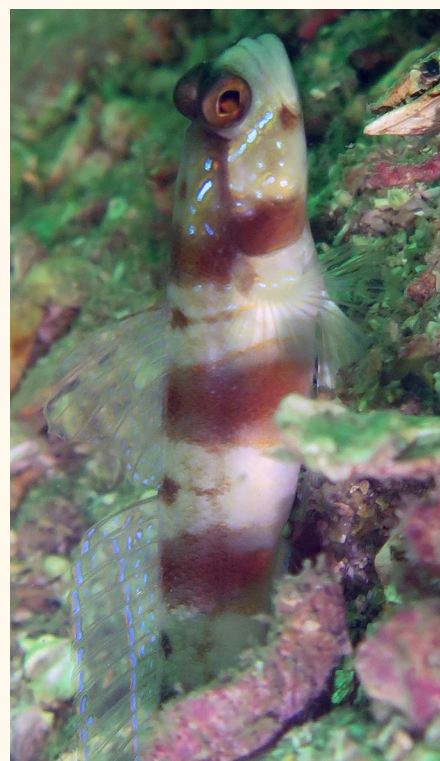
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Knobsnout Parrotfish

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scientific name: *scarus ovifrons*

Description (looks):

- Body bluish and orange-yellow, with orange-yellow scale edges.
- Fins orange-yellow with blue margins.
- A humped, large bump on forehead.



Interesting facts:

- They possess fused teeth that form a beak-like structure, enabling them to bite off chunks of coral and scrape algae.
- Reported to cause food poisoning in Japan due to palytoxin.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Commonly found in the shallow, sunlit areas of coral reefs, particularly near the fringing zones where they graze on algae and other materials.



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Common Silver-Biddy

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scientific name: gerres oyena

Description (looks):

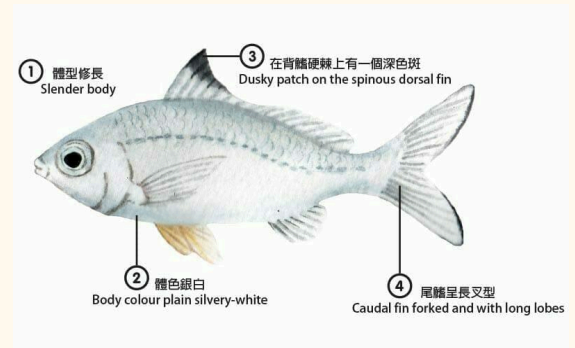
- Slender, plain silvery-white body.
- Dusky patch on the spinous dorsal fin.
- Caudal fin forked and with long lobes.

Interesting facts:

- The common silver-biddy possesses highly protrusible jaws, which they can extend outwards and downwards to form a tube-like structure used for feeding on bottom-dwelling invertebrates.
- Males can only live up to 6 years, while females can live up to 8.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Mostly observed singly on sandy bottoms, whilst juveniles observed in small groups in sheltered waters near reefs or over boulders.





Live Sharksucker

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scientific name: *echeneis naucrates*

Description (looks):

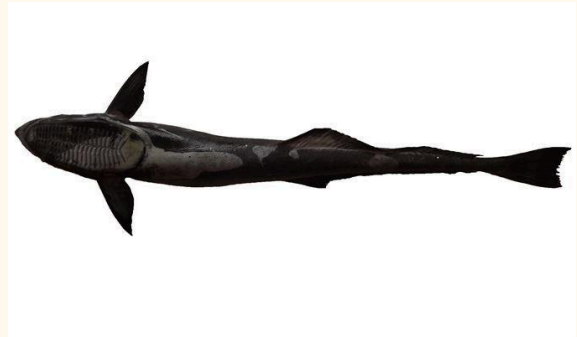
- Body greyish-brown to black.
- Two horizontal white lines running through the full length of the body, ending at caudal fin base.
- An oval sucking disc on head.

Interesting facts:

- Usually observed latching onto larger fishes such as sharks, dolphins, turtles and divers.
- Some records show fishermen's use of the Live sharksucker to capture fish and sea turtles.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Once observed latching onto a large ray in Hong Kong.



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Lemon Damsel

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scientific name: pomacentrus moluccensis

Description (looks):

- Body yellow.
- A small black dot on upper pectoral fin base, and a small dark dot on gill cover, which may sometimes appear blue.
- Anal fin with black or blue margin.

Interesting facts:

- Females will attach eggs to substrates such as boulders, and males will guard and aerate the eggs until hatching
- Found often in aquariums as it is a popular fish, because of its bright yellow appearance.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Rare. Observed once in shallow coral areas at Sharp Island. Known to occur in small aggregation, but not observed in Hong Kong.



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Lighthouse Lizardfish

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scientific name: *synodus jaculum*

Description (looks):

- Body grey to brown.
- Several vertical bars and diamond-shaped patterns on side.
- A black saddle blotch on the base of the tail.



Interesting facts:

- They are masters of disguise, burying themselves in the sand or rubble with just their head exposed to ambush unsuspecting prey.
- Their needle-like teeth help them quickly grab their prey.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Inhabits coral reefs. Commonly found on sand or rubble near coral heads.



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Piano Sandperch

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scientific name: *parapercis kamoharai*

Description (looks):

- Body light brown.
- A horizontal white band runs from behind eyes to caudal peduncle, and a yellowish band just below.
- Below the yellow band, a black spot appears where each vertical bar ends.



Interesting facts:

- Are ambush predators, relying on their camouflage and quick movements to catch their prey.
- They are found in the waters of Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In Hong Kong, it is an uncommon fish which is usually seen in outer islands.



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Red-Lined Sleeper

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scientific name: *alenciennea immaculata*

Description (looks):

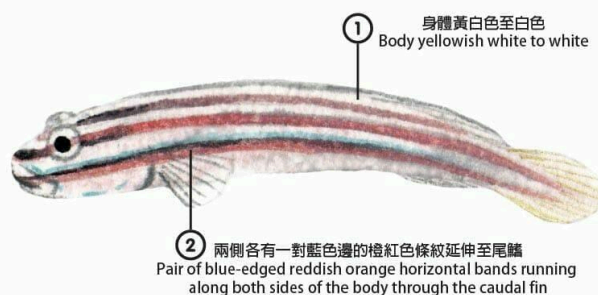
- Body yellowish white to white.
- A pair of blue-edged reddish-orange horizontal bands running along both sides of the body through the caudal fin.
- They can grow up to 13 cm in total length.

Interesting facts:

- Sieve sand through gills to seek small organisms as food.
- Able to dig own burrow.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In sandy and rubble areas, also in muddy sand bottoms. Often observed in pairs.



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Red Lionfish

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scientific name: *pterois volitans*

Description (looks):

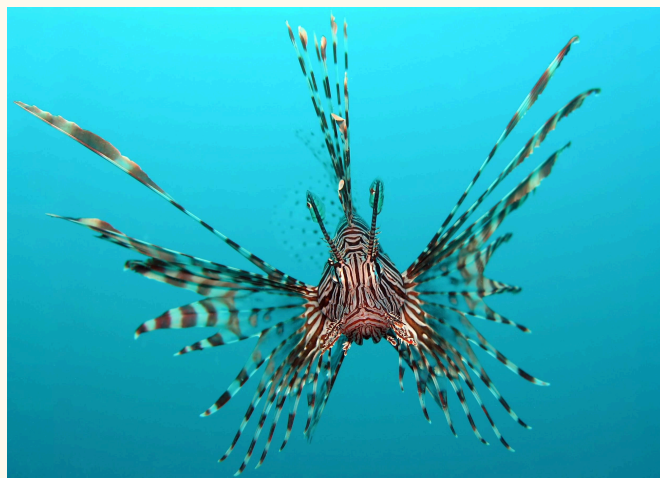
- Body with numerous white-edged blackish to reddish brown vertical bars.
- Prominent, long tentacles above eyes.
- Large and feather-like pectoral fins, reaching caudal fin, with alternate black and white bands. Dorsal, anal and caudal fins with dark dots.

Interesting facts:

- Was introduced to Western Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, documented in 2009 and 2013 studies to cause negative ecological impacts.
- Dorsal spines are venomous. May cause a painful sting and even fatalities.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Although common elsewhere in South East Asia, it is rarer in Hong Kong, as it is not found at popular dive sites, or at slightly deeper locations.



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Round Ribbontail Ray

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scientific name: *taeniura meyeni*

Description (looks):

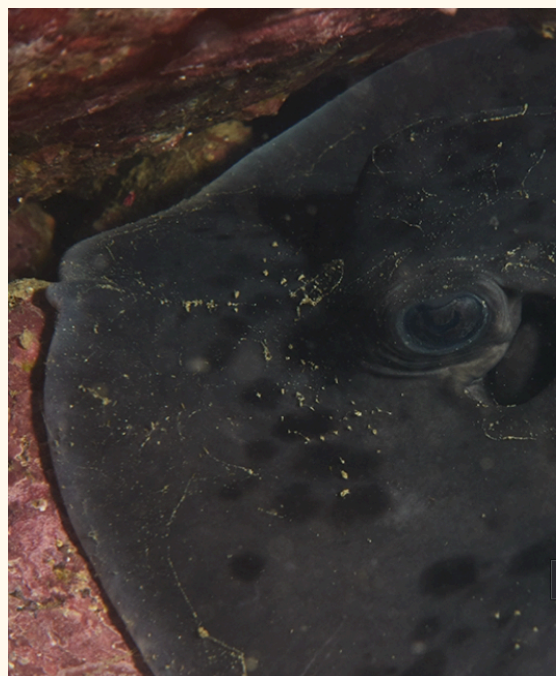
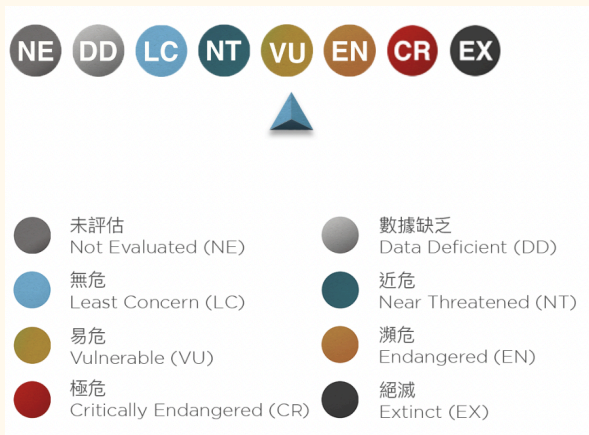
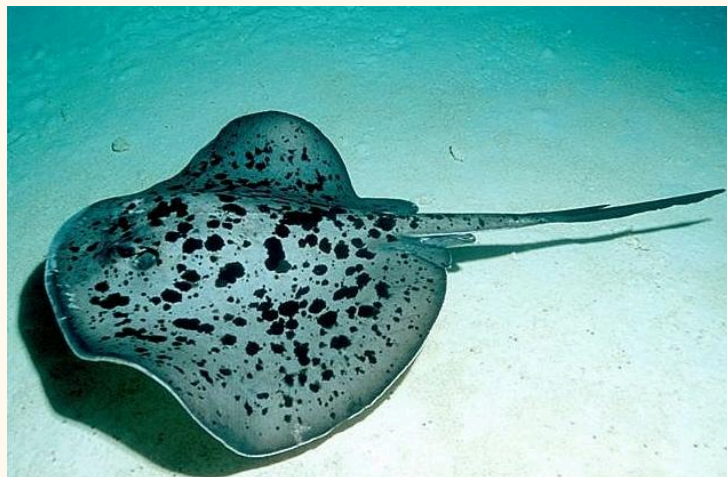
- Body rounded.
- Body grey with black spots dorsally, white ventrally.
- Two venomous spines on tail.

Interesting facts:

- Ovoviviparous (eggs develop and hatch within the mother's body, and offsprings are born live).
- The intense fishing pressure renders its wild population classed as "vulnerable" by the IUCN Red list of Threatened Species

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Single individuals observed hiding in coral areas and rocky reefs at Nam She Wan, Port Island, Sham Wan, and Tung Ping Chau. One of the largest rays in Hong Kong most likely encountered by divers.





Sand Lizardfish

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scientific name: synodus dermatogenys

Description (looks):

- Body colour variable with 7 dark saddles.
- Body colouration varies according to the habitats, generally brownish
- A grey blue band runs from gill cover to tail base.



Interesting facts:

- Buries itself in sand, leaving only eyes and nostrils exposed to ambush prey.
- Males are reported to aggregate and interact aggressively just before sunset during spawning season.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Found in coral areas, rocky reefs and in sandy areas. Often observed to lie motionless on sand or boulders, or bury most parts of its body in sand.



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Scissortail Sergeant

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scientific name: *abudedefduf sexfasciatus*

Description (looks):

- Body from bluish, greenish to whitish.
- Four vertical dark bars on body and one on caudal peduncle.
- Two black stripes on the upper and lower lobes of caudal fin. The stripe on the upper lobe reaches caudal peduncle.

Interesting facts:

- Polygynous. Males may have up to 12 females in one spawning season.
- Males are territorial, protect and aerate eggs laid within the territory, mostly on rocks or dead corals. In some cases males were reported to consume some of their offspring in the nest.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Resides in coral areas and rocky reefs, reported to occur in shallow waters.



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Smalldisc Clingfish

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scientific name: *pherallodus indicus*

Description (looks):

- Body and head purple to red.
- White to goldish markings and lines on body and head.
- They can grow up to 4cm.

Interesting facts:

- Have a special structure on their chest called a "sucking disc", that they can use to cling onto rocks, seaweeds and other objects to easily endure strong currents.
- Shelters amongst sea urchin spines.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- First published record for Hong Kong waters in 2018. Inhabits rocky shores and coral reefs.



未評估
Not Evaluated (NE)

無危
Least Concern (LC)

易危
Vulnerable (VU)

極危
Critically Endangered (CR)

數據缺乏
Data Deficient (DD)

近危
Near Threatened (NT)

瀕危
Endangered (EN)

絕滅
Extinct (EX)





Three-Lined Rainbowfish

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scientific name: *stethojulis trilineata*

Description (looks):

- Body yellowish green, with an orange-yellow patch around pectoral fin base.
- 4 horizontal blue lines on body, 3 stripes lines extend from head to tail, 1 extends from head to mid body.
- Dorsal fin red.



Interesting facts:

- Can change sex from female to male.
- Occurs singly or in small groups.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In rocky reefs, reported to prefer more shallow water exposed to wave action, also in coral areas. Single individual observed once around mixed areas of corals and boulders at Shelter Island. Occasionally seen in aquarium trade.



● 未評估 Not Evaluated (NE)	● 數據缺乏 Data Deficient (DD)
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● 極危 Critically Endangered (CR)	● 絕滅 Extinct (EX)





Undulated Moray

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scientific name: *gymnothorax undulatus*

Description (looks):

- Body dark brown covered with whitish to pale yellow irregular network.
- Head may be yellowish.
- It can grow up to 1.5m.

Interesting facts:

- Mostly nocturnal as they hide in reefs during the day and hunt for food at night.
- Their teeth are shaped to be curved backwards so they can hold onto their prey and easily move the prey backwards for digestion.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- This species is rare in Hong Kong waters. It is recently known from Port Island and Port Shelter.



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Weedy Stingfish

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scientific name: *scorpaenopsis c.f. cirrosa*

Description (looks):

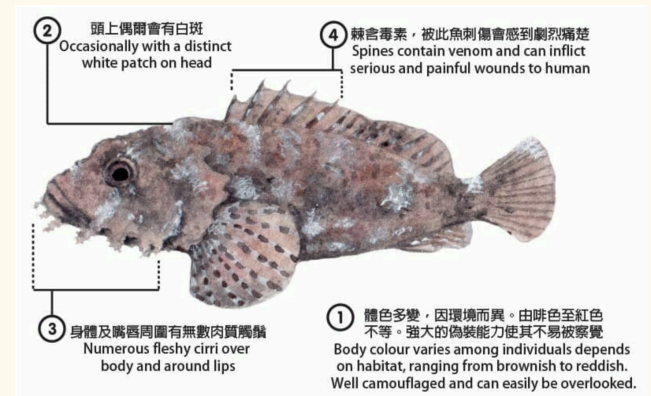
- Body colour varies among individuals depends on habitat, ranging from brownish to reddish.
- Occasionally with a distinct white patch on head.
- Numerous fleshy cirri over body and around lips.

Interesting facts:

- Spines contain venom and can inflict serious and painful wounds to humans.
- It is well camouflaged and can easily be overlooked by divers.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Common, frequently observed in local fish markets and a one year survey recorded over 600 individuals. It is often observed lying motionless on surface of substrate in coral areas and rocky reefs.



NE DD LC NT VU EN CR EX



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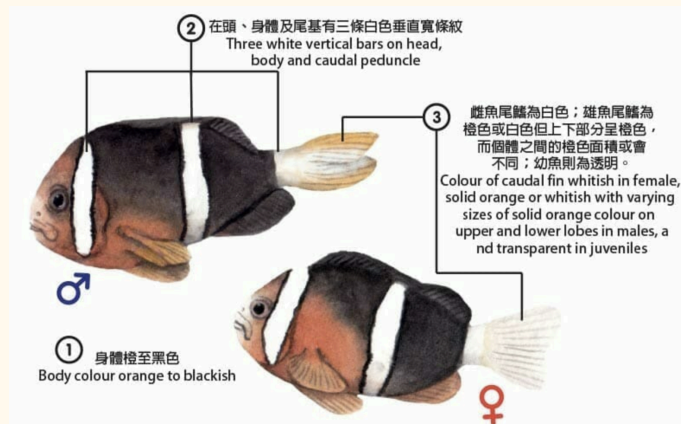
Yellowtail Clownfish

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scientific name: *amphiprion clarkii*

Description (looks):

- Body colour orange to blackish.
- Three white vertical bars on head, body and caudal peduncle.
- Colour of caudal fin whitish in female, solid orange or whitish with varying sizes of solid orange colour on upper and lower lobes in males, and transparent in juveniles.

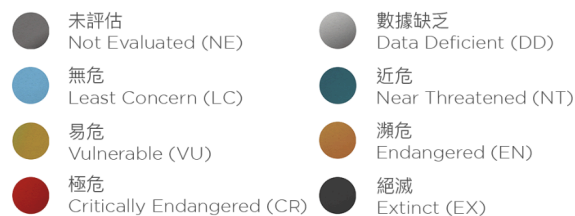


Interesting facts:

- Females are the dominant sex in the social group. May be aggressive and is known to produce a clicking sound as they rise up to defend their home.
- Can change sex from male to female.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In Hong Kong, spawning season lasts from April to September, and females deposit 6 – 10 egg batches. Each batch can contain 462 – 2,612 eggs.





Zebra Turkeyfish

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scientific name: *dendrochirus zebra*

Description (looks):

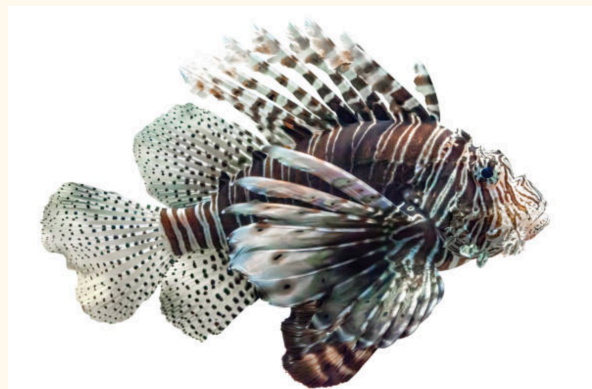
- Vertical reddish-brown bars on each side of the body with alternate, narrower vertical white bars.
- Stripped or spotted fins.
- Usually with tentacles above eyes.

Interesting facts:

- Spawning reportedly occurs after sunset. Each time, females spawn two mucous sacks, and each sack contains a few thousand eggs. The mucus helps to deter egg-eating predators.
- Spines are venomous, and can cause a painful sting to humans.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Uncommon, but occasionally seen in the aquarium trade. Found in coral areas and rocky reefs, reported to utilize barren areas of bedrock with little cover.



未評估
Not Evaluated (NE)

無危
Least Concern (LC)

易危
Vulnerable (VU)

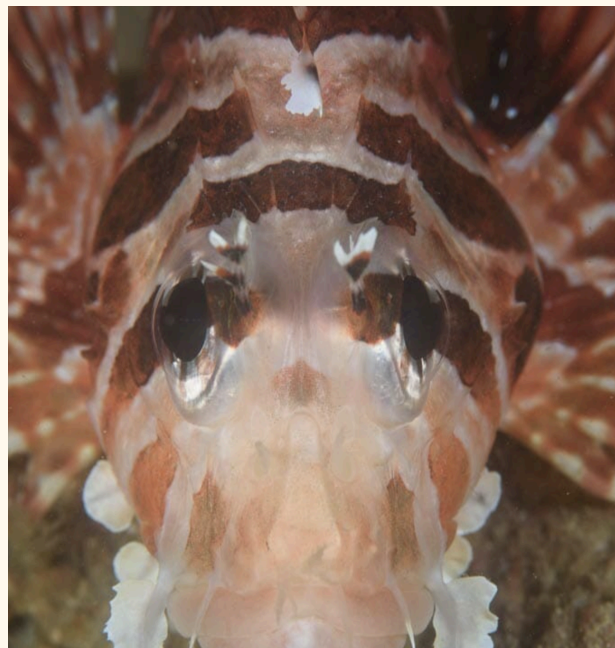
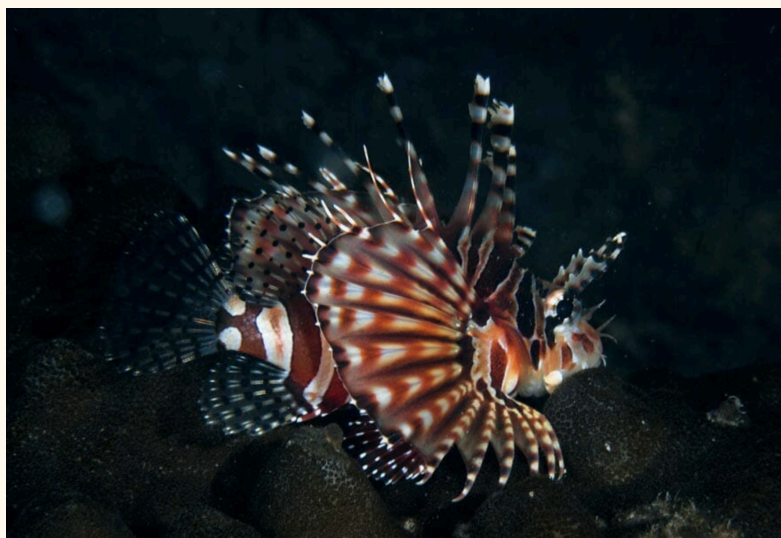
極危
Critically Endangered (CR)

數據缺乏
Data Deficient (DD)

近危
Near Threatened (NT)

瀕危
Endangered (EN)

絕滅
Extinct (EX)





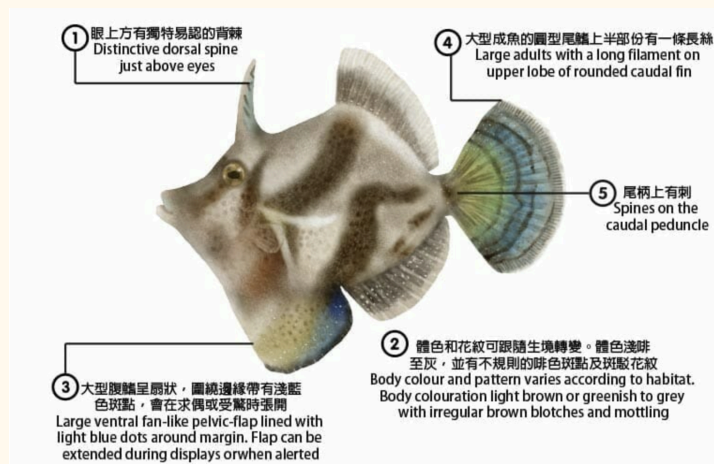
Fan-Bellied Leatherjacket

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scientific name: *monacanthus chinensis*

Description (looks):

- Body colour and pattern varies according to habitat. Body colouration light brown or greenish to grey with irregular brown blotches and mottling.
- Large ventral fan-like pelvic-flap lined with light blue dots around margin. Flap can be extended during displays or when alerted.
- Distinctive dorsal spine just above eyes, and spines on caudal peduncle.



Interesting facts:

- Can be seen sheltering among black corals at night.
- Is an omnivore which feeds on seagrass, algae and benthic invertebrates.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Common, and is one of the most abundant filefishes in Hong Kong. Often seen in local fish markets, more than 100 individuals were seen in a single market in a year.



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Bubblefin Wrasse

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scientific name: *halichoeres nigrescens*

Description (looks):

- Body colouration greenish dorsally and white ventrally, with short, reddish brown vertical bars across body.
- A diffused dark spot on anterior part of the dorsal fin
- A small dark spot on upper pectoral fin base.



① 身體上半深色，下半白色
Body colouration darker on upper body and whitish ventrally

Interesting facts:

- Forms small groups with other fishes, including juvenile goatfishes and parrotfishes.
- Reported to be able to change sexes from females to males.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- In Hong Kong, recorded to spawn from April to July. Females mature at less than 8 cm (Total Length) and males mature at approximately 10 cm (Total Length). Once encountered at night with body wedged in rubble and only head exposed.

NE DD LC NT VU EN CR EX



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Chinese Demoiselle

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scientific name: *neopomacentrus bankieri*

Description (looks):

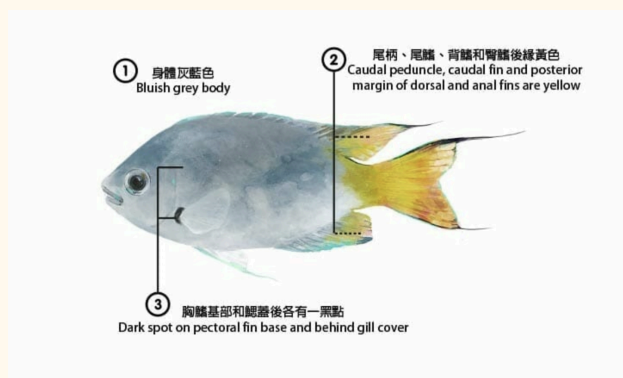
- Bluish grey body.
- Caudal peduncle, caudal fin and posterior margin of dorsal and anal fins are yellow.

Interesting facts:

- Juveniles reported to hide among spines of sea urchins.
- Females adhere eggs on substrate such as boulder and males guard and aerate the eggs.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Common, and is one of the most abundant damselfishes in Hong Kong. Though not regarded as food fish, it is occasionally found in local fish markets. Resides in coral areas and rocky reefs.



NE DD LC NT VU EN CR EX



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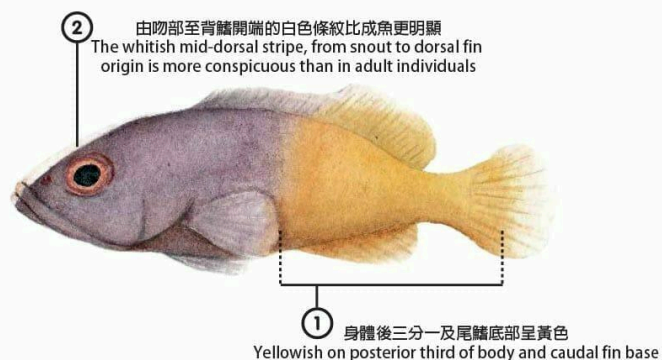
Chocolate Hind

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scientific name: *cephalopholis boenak*

Description (looks):

- Body colouration is mainly brownish, varying from dark brown to pale reddish brown with 7 – 8 vertical dark bars over the body.
- Blue and dark sub-marginal band on posterior dorsal, anal and caudal fins.
- A distinctive black spot between upper and middle opercular spines.



Interesting facts:

- Wary of divers, juveniles are secretive and hide within coral and reef crevices.
- Can change sex from female to male at 10 - 15 cm (standard length), aged 1-4 years. However individual fish can also be born as males. . It also lives in a single male with multiple females and juveniles group.

Presence and state in Hong Kong:

- Spawning season around Hong Kong is from April to October. Can live for at least 11 years.

