

## Short Communication

# New sighting record of Devil Scorpionfish *Scorpaenopsis diabolus* (Cuvier, 1829) (Scorpaeniformes: Scorpaenidae) from Andaman Islands

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## Abstract

A scorpionfish species, *Scorpaenopsis diabolus* (Cuvier, 1829) has been recorded for the first time from the Indian waters around Andaman Islands, India. Its description, ecology of habitat and distributional range has been provided.

**Keywords:** Andaman Islands, Devil Scorpionfish, India, New record, *Scorpaenopsis diabolus*

## Introduction

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, situated in the Bay of Bengal between 6° 45' -13° 45' N and 92° 10' -94° 15' E, consists of 572 islands, islets and rocks and covers a distance of almost 750 km North-South with a coastline of 1962 km, and bring in for India, an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 600 thousand km. A comprehensive and authoritative account of fishes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was published by Francis Day (1870). Rajan *et al.* (2013) listed a total of 1434 species of fish including 20 species of scorpionfishes. Worldwide there are about 231 species known in the family Scorpaenidae, of which 53 species occur on or in the vicinity of East Indian coral reefs (Allen and Erdmann, 2012). The fish fauna of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is one of the most diverse due to zoogeographically isolated from mainland and close to south Asian countries from where the most numbers of coral reef fishes are present.

## Material and Methods

The new record of devil scorpionfish was made by field surveys, underwater observations and photography in

the coral reef ecosystem in North Bay, South Andaman using SCUBA gears. The reefs are fringing, depth range to 12m, rubble bottoms, sandy and silt, predominately boulder *Porites* corals and few *Acropora* sp. Reef is subject to heavy siltation due to erosion and tidal effect, covered mainly with macro algae. Taxonomic classification follows Nelson (2006).

## Results and Discussion

Scorpionfishes have cryptic habits and excellent camouflage nature. They are sedentary bottom dwellers that remain hidden in crevices of the reef. Many exhibits variegated colour patterns that blend well with their surroundings. They remain stationary for long periods waiting for prey. All members of the family are characterised in having venomous fin spines capable of inflicting painful stings. A bony ridge across the cheek; a relatively large, spiny head. The genus *Scorpaenopsis* currently contains 11 valid species in the region of East Indies (Allen & Erdmann, 2012), earlier a total of five species were reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, *viz.*, *Scorpaenopsis cirrosa* (Thunberg, 1793), *S. gibbosa* Bloch & Schneider, 1801, *S. oxycephala*

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(Bleeker, 1849), *S. possi* Randall & Eschmeyer, 2001 and *S. venosa* (Cuvier, 1829). However, *Scorpaenopsis cirrosa* is an endemic species to East Asia and does not occur in the Andaman Sea. *S. gibbosa* is a western Indian Ocean species again not occur in the Andaman Sea. The present study reveals that, with the new addition of *Scorpaenopsis diabolus* only four species of the genus *Scorpaenopsis* are known from these islands.



## Systematics

Order SCORPAENIFORMES

Family SCORPAENIDAE

*Scorpaenopsis diabolus* (Cuvier, 1829) Devil Scorpionfish

1829. *Scorpaena diabolus* Cuvier, *Le Regne Animal*: v.2:166  
(Type locality: Indo-West Pacific).

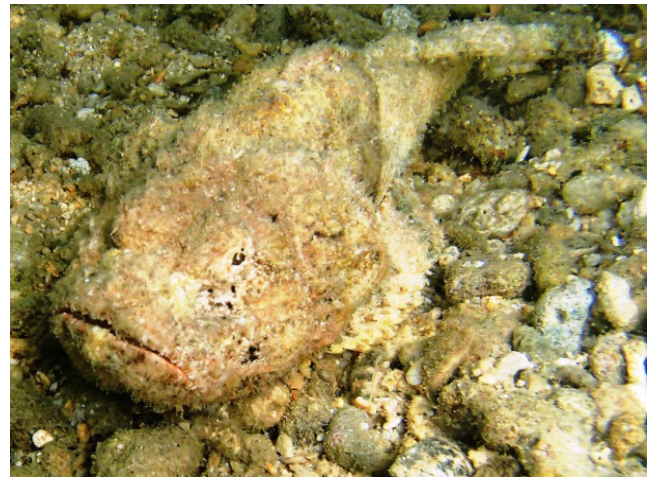
2012. *Scorpaenopsis diabolus*, Allen & Erdmann, *Reef fishes of the East Indies*: 233.

*Diagnostic characters*: D XII, 9; A III, 5; P 17-19; LSS 43-45. Upper opercle spine double; back elevated below spinous portion of dorsal fin, giving humpback appearance; interorbital broad; very deep occipital and suborbital pits. Attains 23.5 cm. Excellent rock like camouflage, with

inner surface of pectoral fin brilliant yellow-orange with isolated black spots.

*Habitat*: Solitary or pairs on rubble or weed bottoms. Coastal and offshore reefs. Frequently confused with true stonefish (*Synanceia verrucosa*).

*Distribution*: Red Sea and East Africa to Hawaiian and Marquesas Islands and Australia to Japan and Ogasawara Islands; ranges throughout East Indian region.



*Remarks*: The present report forms the first record of this species from India. This species have distinguished characters such as, the body high behind head, humpbacked dark spot on inside of pectoral with a subterminal dark blotch but no subterminal band.

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