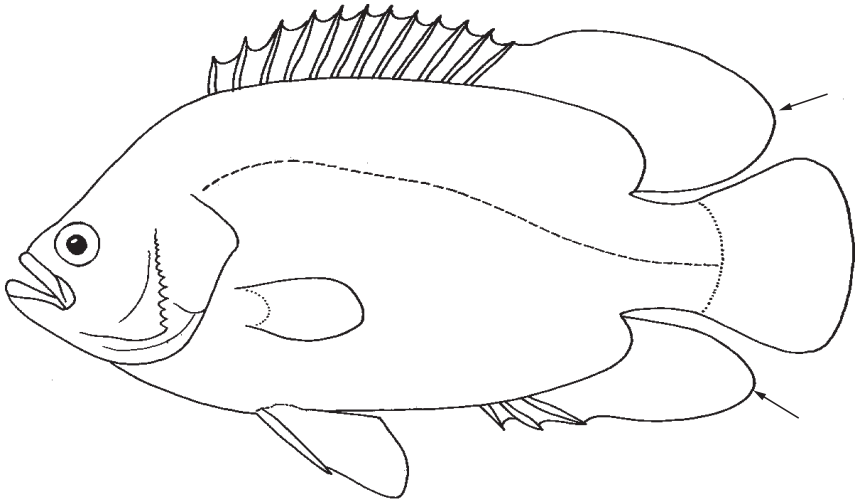


LOBOTIDAE

Tripletails

by K.E. Carpenter

Diagnostic characters: Moderately deep bodied and compressed fishes (size to over 1 m). Head length shorter than body depth; profile of head from eye to just posterior to nape generally concave. **Preopercle finely to coarsely serrate**; opercle with 1 or 2 flat spines. Mouth terminal to slightly superior, extending to anterior or middle portion of eye; in jaws, an outer row of small conical teeth and an inner band of smaller teeth; **roof of mouth without teeth**. **Single dorsal fin with XI to XIII spines and 13 to 16 soft rays**; **soft-rayed portion broadly rounded and extending beyond base of caudal fin**. **Anal fin with III spines**, second anal-fin spine enlarged (in *Coius*) or not enlarged (*Lobotes*), and **8 to 11 soft rays, the soft-rayed portion broadly rounded and extending beyond base of caudal fin**. Caudal fin rounded. Scales ctenoid, 42 to 70 in lateral line. **Colour:** brownish, olive, or yellowish and sometimes mottled, or whitish with 4 to 10 dark brownish bars.



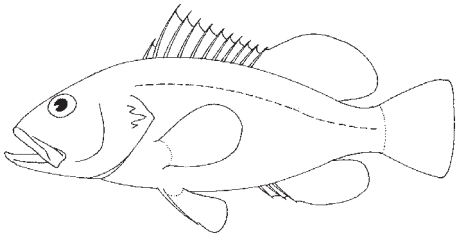
Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Coastal and estuarine, some entering fresh water; some associated with floating objects well out to sea. Feed mostly on small fish and invertebrates. Caught by traps, hook-and-line, trawls, gill nets, and seines.

Remarks: The species of *Coius* are sometimes separated from *Lobotes* and variously placed in either the Coidae or Datnioididae. *Datnioides* is a junior synonym of *Coius*. Two other species of *Coius* occur in the area but are restricted to fresh water. These are *C. microlepis* (Bleeker, 1853) and *C. undecimradiatus* Roberts and Kottelat, 1994.

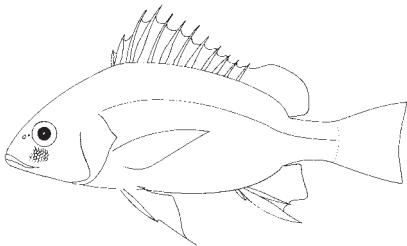
Similar families occurring in the area

Serranidae: certain serranid species look similar to tripletails but all serranids can be distinguished by the usually 3 flat spines on upper part of opercle (1 or 2 flat spines in *Lobotes*); in addition, those species that tend to look like tripletails typically have fewer than XI dorsal-fin spines.

Haemulidae: certain species of haemulids look similar to tripletails but these can be distinguished by the presence of chin pores.

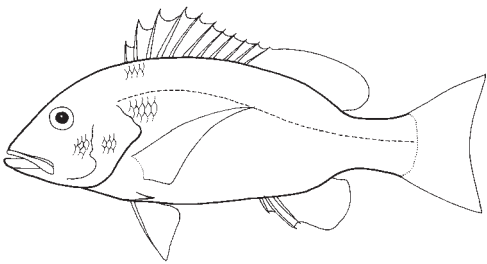


Serranidae



Haemulidae

Lutjanidae: certain species of lutjanids can look similar to species of *Coius* but these can be readily distinguished by the truncate, emarginate, or forked caudal fins, the usual absence of an enlarged second dorsal-fin spine (second dorsal-fin spine enlarged compared to third spine in *Coius*), and teeth usually present on vomer and palatines (absent in Lobotidae).



Lutjanidae

Key to the species of Lobotidae occurring in the area

- 1a. Third anal-fin spine longer than second anal-fin spine; 42 to 45 scales in lateral line **Lobotes surinamensis**
- 1b. Second anal-fin spine longer than third anal-fin spine; 55 to 70 scales in lateral line → 2
- 2a. Total gill rakers on first gill arch 20 to 23; anal fin usually with 9 soft rays . . . **Coius quadrifasciatus**
(India to Viet Nam, Indonesia, and Borneo)
- 2b. Total gill rakers on first gill arch 15 to 17; anal fin usually with 10 soft rays **Coius campbelli**
(Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea)

List of species occurring in the area

The symbol  is given when species accounts are included.

-  *Coius campbelli* (Whitley, 1938)
-  *Coius quadrifasciatus* (Sevastianof, 1809)
-  *Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790)

References

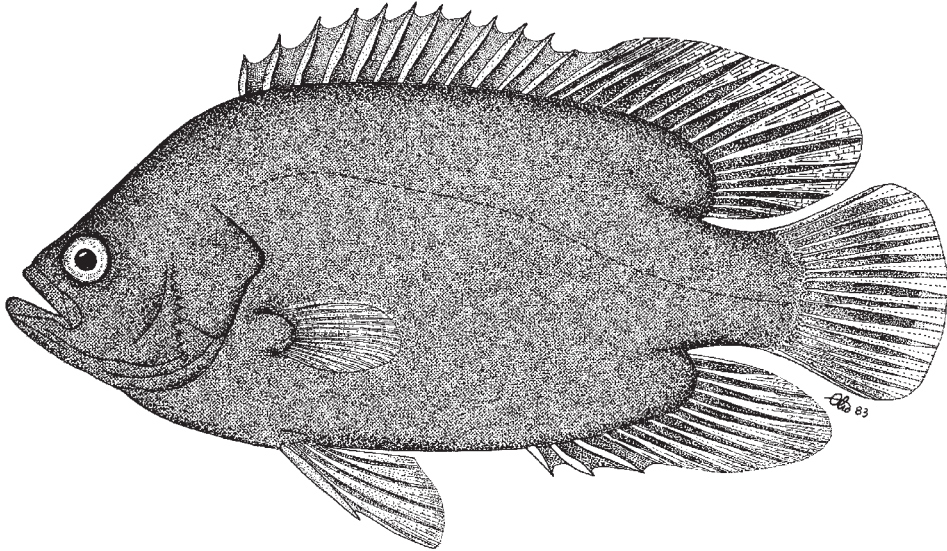
Heemstra, P.C. 1984. Lobotidae. In *FAO species identification sheets for fishery Purposes. Western Indian Ocean (Fishing Area 51)*, edited by W. Fischer and G. Bianchi. Vol. 2. Rome, Italy (unpaginated).

Roberts, T.R. and M. Kottelat. 1994. The Indo-Pacific tigerperches, with a new species from the Mekong basin (Pisces: Coiidae). *Ichthyol. Explor. Freshwaters*, 5(3):257-266.

***Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790)**

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: None / None.

FAO names: En - Tripletail; Fr - Croupia roche; Sp - Dormilona.

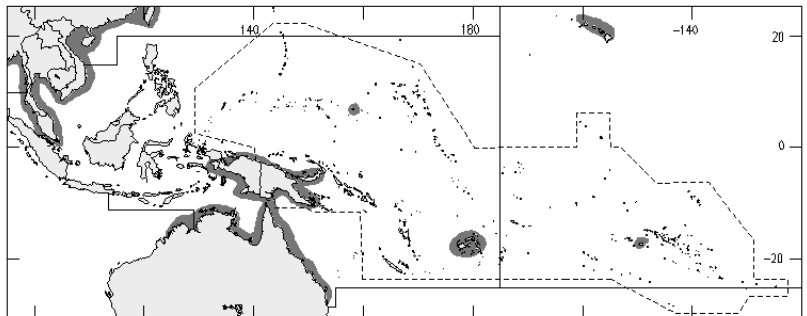


Diagnostic characters: Body moderately compressed and deep, its depth 2 to 2.5 times in standard length. Head length shorter than body depth. Opercle with 1 or 2 flat spines. Mouth slightly superior, reaching posteriorly to about middle of eye; upper jaw slightly protrusible; jaws with an outer row of short, close-set canines and an inner band of smaller teeth; **no teeth on vomer, palatines, or tongue; preopercle coarsely serrate.** Branchiostegal rays 6. First gill arch with 6 or 7 gill rakers on upper limb, 13 to 15 on lower limb. **A single dorsal fin with XI to XIII strong spines and 13 to 16 soft rays; anal fin with III spines and 11 or 12 soft rays; soft dorsal and anal fins large and broadly rounded, reaching past base of caudal fin (appearing as 3 tails together with rounded caudal fin).** Caudal peduncle deep, its depth greater than its length. Scales ctenoid and fairly large, covering body and head except for preorbital region and jaws; lateral-line scales 42 to 45. **Colour:** juveniles brownish and often mottled darker; adults uniform dark brown or olive to mottled yellowish.

Size: Maximum total length 100 cm; commonly to 50 cm.

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: In coastal areas and estuaries; also found offshore around floating objects. Juvenile coloration is similar to dead mangrove leaves and they mimic fallen leaves by floating sideways. Feeds mostly on benthic invertebrates and small fish. Caught by beach seines, gill nets, trawls, traps, and hook-and line. Valued as both a food and sport fish.

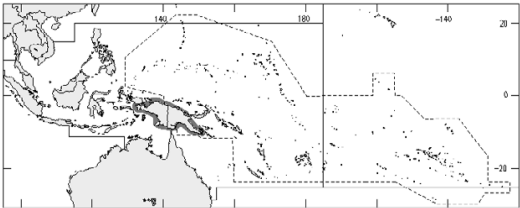
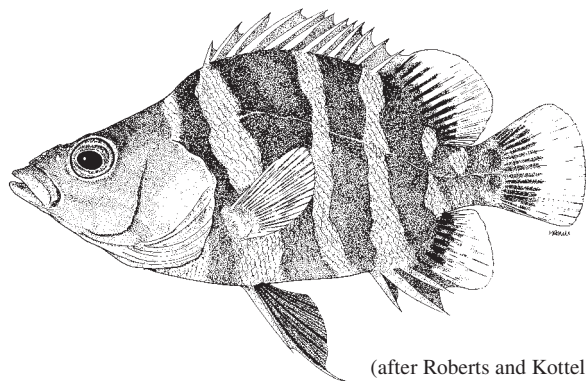
Distribution: Worldwide in tropical and subtropical waters. In the Indo-Pacific, from East Africa through all countries of Southeast Asia north to Taiwan Province of China and southern Japan, northern Australia to southern Queensland, New Guinea to New Britain, and south to Fiji. Reported as rare visitors in Ponape, Hawaii, and Tahiti.



***Coius campbelli* (Whitley, 1938)**

En - New Guinean tigerperch.

Maximum standard length 32 cm. Occurs in brackish coastal lagoons and rivers mouths, and in fresh-water rivers far inland from the coast. Restricted to coastal waters and drainages of New Guinea and the Gulf of Papua. Feeds on small fish and invertebrates. The Southeast Asian species of *Coius* occurring in brackish water look similar and have a variable number of bars on the sides. These were previously considered a single species, *C. quadrifasciatus*, but the New Guinean form is now considered distinct from the form occurring elsewhere in Asia.

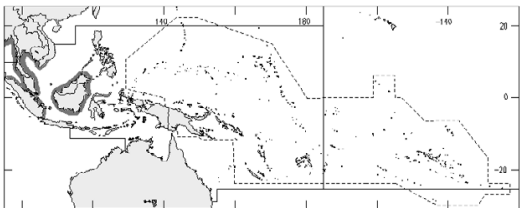
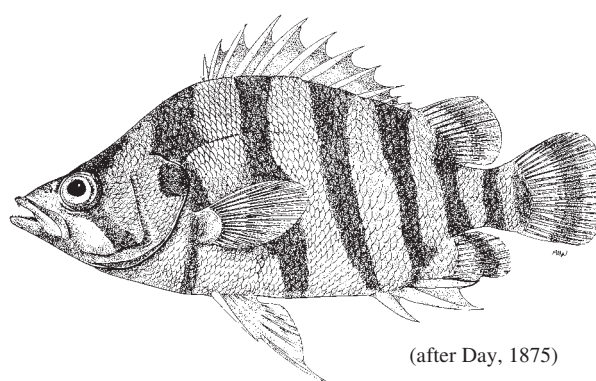


(after Roberts and Kottelat, 1994)

***Coius quadrifasciatus* (Sevastianof, 1809)**

En - Barred tigerfish.

Maximum total length 30 cm. Occurs in brackish coastal lagoons and rivers mouths, and in fresh-water rivers far inland from the coast. From India around the mainland coast of Southeast Asia to southern Viet Nam and Sumatra and Borneo. Feeds on small fish and invertebrates.



(after Day, 1875)