

***Pomacentrus aurifrons*, a new species of damselfish (Pomacentridae) from Melanesia**

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Abstract

A new species of pomacentrid fish is described from coral reefs of Papua New Guinea. Specimens were collected by the author between 1982 and 2000. *Pomacentrus aurifrons* is described from 12 specimens, 22.4–61.5 mm SL, collected at depths between 7–12 m. It closely resembles *P. smithi* Fowler and Bean from Indonesia and the Philippines. These species have similar morphology but are easily distinguished by the taller dorsal fin of *P. aurifrons* (tallest dorsal ray averaging 1.37 in HL versus 1.65 in HL for *P. smithi*) and colour pattern differences, particularly the broad zone of yellow encompassing the snout, forehead, and base of the anterior dorsal spines.

Key words: Pomacentridae; *Pomacentrus aurifrons*, new species; *Pomacentrus smithi*; Papua New Guinea

Introduction

Damselfishes of the family Pomacentridae are among the most conspicuous members of the diurnal coral reef fish community. Indeed, few groups can match their sheer number of individuals. Allen (1991) reviewed the family, although many additional species have been described over the past decade, particularly in the two largest genera, *Chromis* and *Pomacentrus*. The family currently contains approximately 350 species in 29 genera. Over three-fourths of the species occur in the tropical Indian and Pacific oceans. Australia and Indonesia have the greatest number of species, with well over 100 found in each country.

The present paper describes a new species that was previously misidentified as *Pomacentrus smithi* Fowler & Bean, which is a common inhabitant of Indonesian and Philippine reefs. The author has long suspected that the population of *P. "smithi"* from Papua New Guinea and adjacent areas was distinct from *P. smithi* from Indonesia and the Philip-