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ICAR-CMFRI finds rare scorpionfish with venomous spines and ability to change colour

ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) scientists have found alive a rare fish that changes colour and carries neurotoxic venom in its spines, for the first time in Indian waters. Camouflaged within the seagrass meadows, the band-tail scorpionfish (*Scorpaenopsis neglecta*) was found off Sethukari coast in the Gulf of Mannar during an underwater exploratory survey of the seagrass ecosystem in the region. Dr. R. Jeyabaskaran, Senior Scientist, ICAR-CMFRI led the team of researchers.



The fish is called 'scorpionfish' because its spines contain neurotoxic venom.

A nocturnal feeder, the band-tail scorpionfish lays motionless in the sea bottom and waits for the prey to come close to it. Most of them feed during night time with an ability to attack and suck its prey in lightning speed. Having a highly powerful sensory system, the fish could even detect respiratory ventilation flows produced by crabs at a distance of 10 cm in dark environment. Unlike other fishes, band-tail scorpionfish uses its lateral sensory system instead of eyes to hunt its prey. This fish mainly feeds on small benthic fishes like gobies and blennies, crustaceans and other benthic macro invertebrates.



The specimen was deposited in the National Marine Biodiversity Museum of the ICAR-CMFRI.

(Source: ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi)