

Occurrence of the Barred soapfish off Kovalam, Tamil Nadu

The Barred soapfish *Diploprion bifasciatum* Cuvier, 1828, family Liopropomatidae of order Perciformes is a coral reef-associated species widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific region. Records of *Diploprion* species from the Indian coast are scarce. A single specimen of *D. bifasciatum* were collected from off Kovalam (12°47'42"N; 80°15'43"E, Tamil Nadu (southeast coast of India), on 14 August 2025. The specimen was captured using a bottom-set gillnet (56 mm mesh size) at a depth of 12 m.

The specimen measured 184 mm in total length. The body is compressed and moderately deep; the mouth is oblique with a convex interorbital space and is protrusible, with villiform teeth present on the premaxilla. The lateral line is more strongly convex anteriorly than posteriorly. The margins of the preopercle, subopercle, and interopercle are serrated. The caudal fin is rounded. Pelvic fins are elongate, with their tips reaching the spinous portion of the anal fin. A deep notch separates the spinous and soft portions of the dorsal fin, with the third dorsal spine being the longest. The pelvic fins are dark with a slight yellowish tinge. Scales are ctenoid and



Barred soapfish *Diploprion bifasciatum*

shallowly embedded in the skin, and are absent on the preorbital region of the head. The body is light yellowish in colour, with two prominent dark bands: the first, narrow band extends from the nape to the branchiostegal region, and the second, broader band runs from the anterior dorsal spines to the anal region.

The species has previously been recorded in India from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Rajan and Sreeraj, 2015), Odisha (Barman *et al.*, 2007; Pati *et al.*, 2018), Gulf of Mannar (Tamil Nadu) (Murugan and Namboothri, 2012), the Lakshadweep Islands (Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2013), and the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat (Vadher *et al.*, 2024). This record

represents an additional distributional data point for *Diploprion bifasciatum* along the southeast coast of India. The observed morphological characters and colouration are consistent with earlier descriptions, confirming the taxonomic identity of the specimen. The occurrence of this species in shallow reef-associated waters off Kovalam contributes new baseline data of this poorly documented soapfish serranidae in Indian waters and highlights the need for further targeted surveys.

Remya Unnikrishnan¹, L. Remya² and K. V. Akhilesh

¹Madras Regional Station of ICAR-CMFRI, ²ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi.