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NOTE

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A FIRST REPORT OF *REDIGOBIUS OYENSI* (DE BEAUFORT, 1913) (TELEOSTEI: GOBIONELLINAE) FROM CAR NICOBAR ISLAND, INDIA

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The Andaman & Nicobar group of Islands (ANI) belonging to the union territory of India is situated in the Bay of Bengal between 6.75027778–13.68333333 N & 92.20000000–93.95000000 E, consisting of 572 islands. There are 550 islands in the Andaman group and 22 in the Nicobar group (www.andamans.gov.in). Car Nicobar is the northernmost part of the Nicobar Islands between Little Andaman & Nancowry. There is no inventory or information existing on the freshwater fishes of Car Nicobar Island. It is known that most of the earliest and recent works on freshwater fish documentation were conducted only in the Andaman group of islands (Day 1870; Annandale & Hora 1925; Mukerji 1935; Herre 1939, 1940, 1941; Koumans 1940; Sen 1975; Starmühlner 1978; Talwar 1990, Rao et al. 2000; Palavai & Davidar 2009; Devi 2010; Rajan & Sreeraj 2013, 2014a,b,c; Rajan et al. 2013; Kumar et al. 2016). The gobiid fish genus *Redigobius* are widely distributed in the Indo-west Pacific, inhabiting freshwaters and

estuaries which are close to the sea (Larson 2010). Presently, 12 species of *Redigobius* are known worldwide, of which *R. bikolanus* (Herre 1927) is the most widespread species. From ANI, three species of *Redigobius* are reported, viz. *Redigobius tambujon* (Bleeker, 1854), *R. balteatus* (Herre 1935), and *R. bikolanus*. During an ichthyological survey of Car Nicobar Island, the occurrence of *Redigobius oyensi*, from a freshwater stream was observed, which is reported herein as the new record to the Nicobar Islands, India, and subsequently, the first report of a freshwater fish from Car Nicobar Island.

Underwater faunal survey was conducted in a stream located at a distance of 8km from a tribal village called Kinmai, Car Nicobar Islands (Fig. 1). A single female *Redigobius* sp. was encountered and a photograph of the same was taken with a Nikon 130 water resistant camera. The specimen was collected using a hand net, but the collected specimen could not be brought to the capital, Port Blair due to logistic difficulty. General observation on the stream habitat, flora, and the substrate was noted. Dr. Helen K. Larson from Queensland museum, Australia, who is the first reviser of the genus *Redigobius*, identified the goby based on the photographs.

The goby fish was identified to be *R. oyensi* (Image 1 A–D), based on the following morphological characters: slender pale brownish body, a series of five black blotches along the lateral side of the body. Pale blue to greenish iridescent spots scattered over the body and on the head. Short green speckling over eyes and snout.



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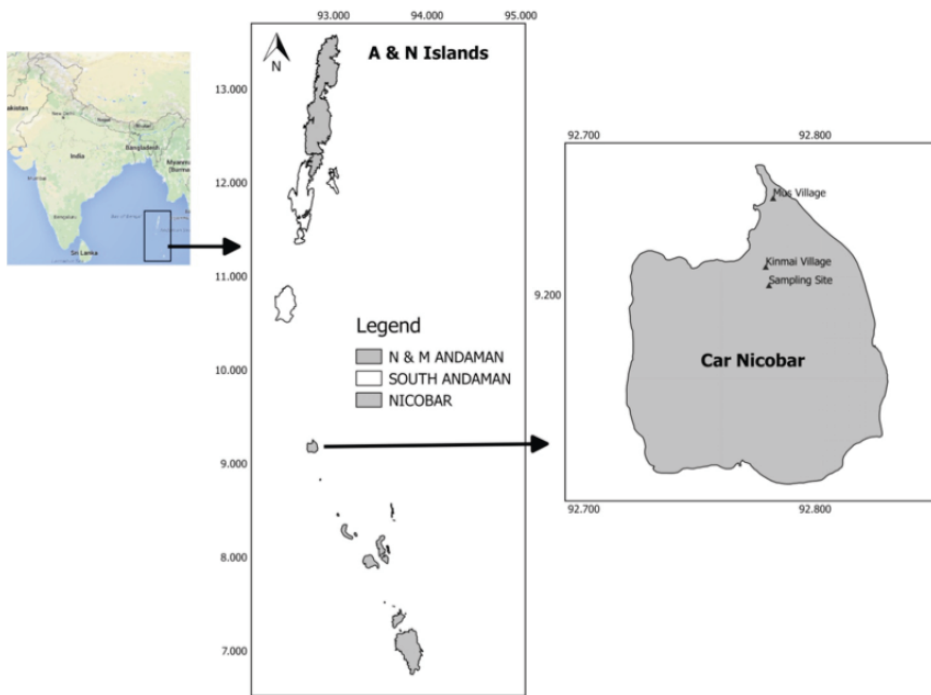


Figure 1. Map of Andaman & Nicobar Islands showing the sampling site near Kinmai Village on Car Nicobar.

First dorsal fin with a dark blotch on the posterior edge; rest of the fin orange to pale yellow color; second dorsal fin translucent, with rows of golden spots. Co-occurring fishes were *R. bikolanus*, *Sicyopterus microcephalus* (Bleeker, 1855), and a crustacean, *Macrobrachium lar* (Fabricius, 1798), which is also the first documentation from Car Nicobar Islands, but seems to be a common inhabitant of the hill-streams of Nicobar Islands. The stream was clear and had a small waterfall in the upstreams; the substrate and the catchment area comprised mainly of dead coral boulders (Image 2 A,B). The bottom of the stream was characterized by coral boulders and black volcanic rocks, devoid of any vegetation except patches of filamentous algae. The stream ran through a series of small pools of 1-meter depth, and flowed into a creek, eventually draining into the sea.

The type locality of *R. oyensi* (= *Gobius oyensi*, de Beaufort, 1913) is Ceram, Indonesia, which is approximately 4,287km from Car Nicobar Island. Presently, *R. oyensi* is known from the Philippines, Indonesia, Micronesia, and known to be occasionally found at the base of waterfalls. It is suggested, that their distribution is patchy and there is a lack of information on global population and abundance. As a result, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species categorize *R. oyensi* as Data Deficient (Larson 2012). Detailed habitat information from Mebulibuli River, Fergusson Island, D'Entrecasteaux Island Group, New Guinea was described by Gerry Allen in Larson (2010), where it is mentioned

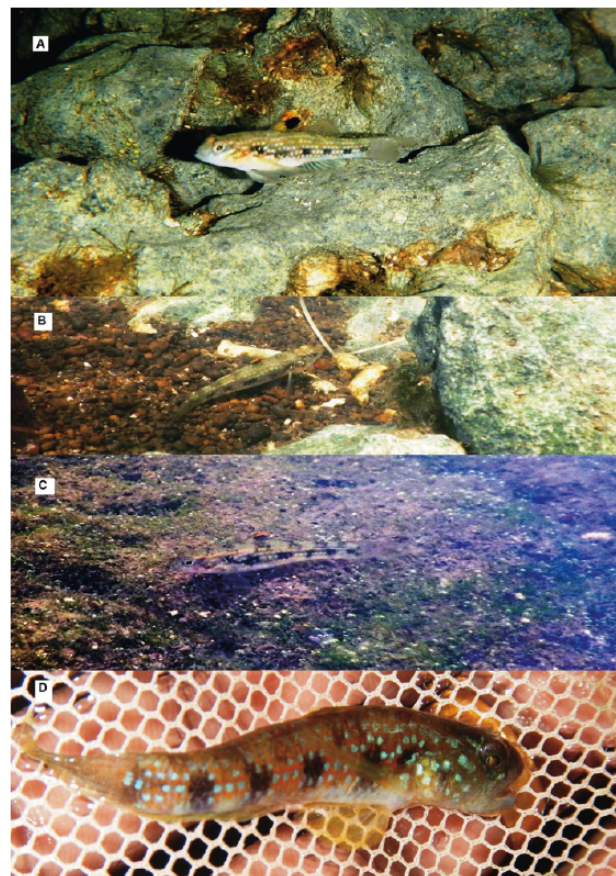


Image 1. *Redigobius oyensi* (female): A–C - underwater at Kinmai village stream, Car Nicobar island (© Raymond Jani Angel); D - captured in hand net (© Raymond Jani Angel).



Image 2. A - Habitat of *Redigobius oyensi* at Kinmai Village, Car Nicobar Island; B - Habitat showing rocky pools made up of coral boulders (© Raymond Jani Angel).

that—“About 1.5 km upstream of the village the river flowed through a series of rapids alternating with rocky pools and shallow broad sections with gravel and cobble substrate, flowing more slowly over gravel and mud downstream of the village, eventually flowing through disturbed forests, village garden and then to mangroves and the sea”. Similar habitat resembling Fergusson Island report is observed in the present study area also, where the stream flowed through a series of rapids alternating with pools, but made up of coral boulders with cobble and black volcanic rock as the substrate, flowing through the tribal village then to a creek and eventually into the sea. The present information adds insight on its specific habitat requirements. The present report contributes to the knowledge on new distribution and habitat for *R. oyensi*. This report paves way for, further research on its population, habitat requirements, life history, and potential threats.

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