GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Palette surgeonfish

Paracanthurus hepatus

Range/Habitat

- The palette surgeonfish is a tropical fish found in the Indo-Pacific, from East Africa to the Line Islands, north to southern Japan, south to the southern Great Barrier Reef, New Caledonia and Samoa. It is found throughout Micronesia. And it is also found from Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), Mariana Islands and Mascarene Islands.
- It is reef associated and may be found in a depth range between 6.6-131 feet (2-40 meters).

Physical Characteristics

- This fish is easily recognized for its bright blue coloration with black markings. It has a yellow tail with black upper and lower margins.
- The palette surgeonfish is a surgeonfish with sharp, venomous spines on both sides of the caudal peduncle.
- It can grow to 12.2 inches (31 centimeters) in length.

Diet/Feeding

• The palette surgeonfish feeds on zooplankton.

Conservation Status

- The palette surgeonfish is not on the IUCN Red list.
- It is a popular fish caught for aquariums.

Additional Information

- Humans should use extreme caution when handling the palette surgeonfish. The spines on either side of the caudal (tail) fin may cause deep puncture wounds leading to infection.
- It is the only species in its genus.
- When alarmed, it will wedge itself tightly among the branches, making it easy for divers to collect.
- It is relatively uncommon and highly localized throughout most of Micronesia.
- Juveniles and sub-adults typically occur in groups in clear reef areas or channels where there is substantial current.

Sources

Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea. Randall, John E., Allen, Gerald R., Steene, Roger C. pg. 428.

Micronesian Reef Fishes. Myers, Robert F. pg.273.