

Serranus tigrinus (Harlequin Bass)

Family: Serranidae (Groupers and Sea Bass)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Harlequin bass, *Serranus tigrinus*.

[<http://www.aquariumdomain.com/viewSpeciesMarine.php?id=108>, downloaded 23 October 2016]

TRAITS. *Serranus tigrinus* can grow to 10cm, so is a small species in its family (Kurtz, 2015). On the underside of its body it displays yellow and black whereas on the upper side it appears black and white. The black marks appear like tiger stripes and also form irregularly shaped rectangles (Saltwaterfish, 2013). Smaller black spots are seen clearly in the dorsal and caudal fins (Kurtz, 2015). Their dark eyes which are bordered with a gold or white colour are positioned high on the head, and it has a long pointed snout (Fig. 1). The bold colours and pointed head in particular make the look of the species quite distinctive from other sea bass.

DISTRIBUTION. This species is found throughout the Caribbean including some areas of South America and the western Atlantic (Fig. 2).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. The harlequin bass occurs among rocks, scattered coral, seagrass beds, rubble zones and reefs in shallow waters up to 40m. It is also found in sandy areas. It feeds mainly on crustaceans which make up a large part of its diet. It is diurnal in activity.

REPRODUCTION. They exhibit synchronous hermaphroditism; the sea bass has both female and male reproductive organs as in an ovary and testis. One individual will lay the eggs while the other fertilises them during mating, then they will switch roles allowing fertilisation to take place again. The harlequin bass does not self-fertilise, and is usually monogamous; they tend to mate, sleep and hunt with only one individual for their lifespan (Reefscapes, 2002).

BEHAVIOUR. The harlequin bass usually moves around in pairs (Fig. 3). Pairs are territorial and would act violently against an individual of similar species or the same species when placed in its habitat as it would be seen as a threat or competition (Kurtz, 2015). *Serranus tigrinus* uses camouflage as a strategy to hide from its predators.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. This species is categorised by the IUCN under the heading Least Concern. It is not a threatened species and therefore does not have any conservation acts made for it. This species due to its unique physical attributes is suitable for aquarists especially beginners. It is hardy in nature and does not have much complex requirements and is found on many sites that advertise fish for sale (AquariumDomain, 2016).

REFERENCES

- AquariumDomain. 2016. Harlequin Bass, (*Serranus tigrinus*) Species Profile, Care Instructions, Feeding and More. www.aquariumdomain.com/viewSpeciesMarine.php?id=108.
- Froese, R. and Pauly, D. 2016. *Serranus tigrinus*, Harlequin Bass: Aquarium." *FishBase*, www.fishbase.se/summary/Serranus-tigrinus.html.
- Kurtz, J. 2015. The Harlequin Bass: An Exceptionally Hardy, Beginner-Friendly Marine Fish. *Saltwater Smarts*, 9 Oct. 2015, www.saltwatersmarts.com/harlequin-bass-exceptionally-hardy-beginner-friendly-marine-fish-serranus-tigrinus-5830/.
- Reefscapes. 2002. Hermaphroditism. www.reefscapes.net/articles/articles/2002/hermaphroditism.html.
- Saltwaterfish. 2013. Harlequin Bass. www.saltwaterfish.com/product-harlequin-bass.
- Snyderman, M., and Wiseman, C. 1996. Sea Basses, Groupers. *Guide to Marine Life: Caribbean, Bahamas, Florida*, Aqua Quest Publications.

Author: Darshana Tulsie

Posted online: 2016

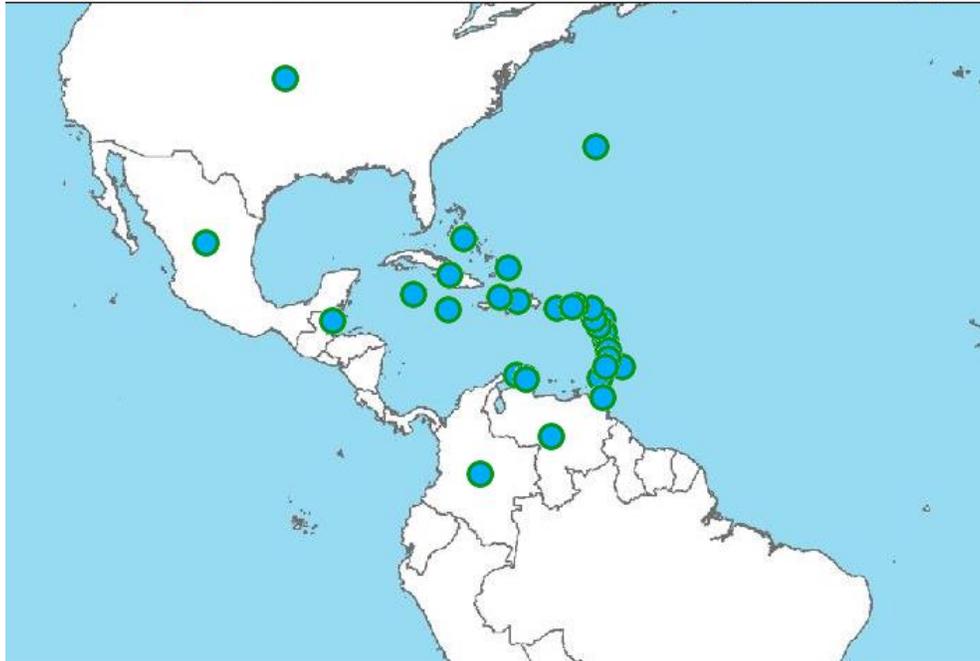


Fig. 2. Harlequin bass geographic distribution (by country).

[<http://www.fishbase.de/Country/CountryList.php?ID=3350&GenusName=Serranus&SpeciesName=tigrinus>, downloaded 23 October 2016]



Fig. 3. Harlequin bass moving around in a pair.

[<http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/pair-of-harlequin-bass-over-coral-head-serranus-tigrinus-news-photo/146141613>, downloaded 23 October 2016]

For educational use only - copyright of images remains with original source