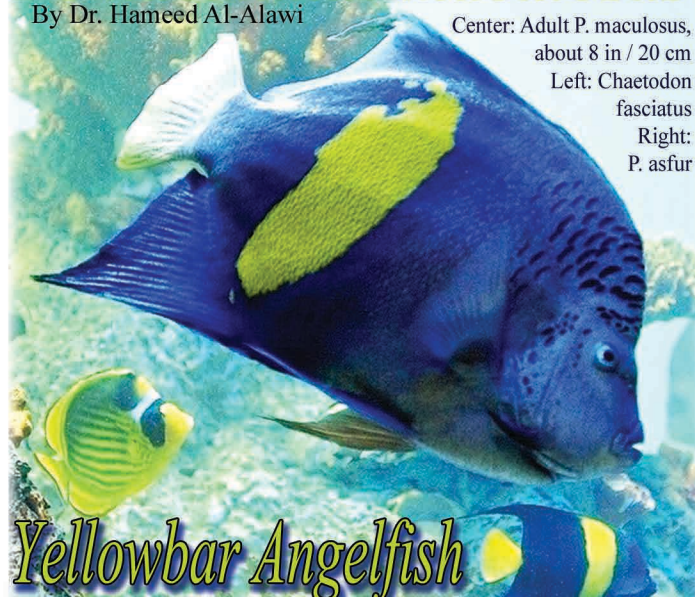


Pomacanthus maculosus

By Dr. Hameed Al-Alawi

Center: Adult P. maculosus, about 8 in / 20 cm
Left: Chaetodon fasciatus
Right: P. asfur



Yellowbar Angelfish

Figure 1. © Bahrain Aqualife Centre, www.marineaquarist.com

Habitat: Distribution & Background

Pomacanthus maculosus was described by Forsskal in 1775. They are found in and around the Arabian Peninsula which is bordered by the Red Sea to the west, the Persian Gulf to the northeast, and the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean to the southeast. They are very common in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf (East of Saudi Arabia), Gulf of Oman into the coasts of the Arabian Sea (the north-western portion of the Indian Ocean along the Oman coast), and along the East African coast down to Kenya. (See red areas of the map in Figure 3.)

They are most often found in areas abundant with stony and soft coral growth on outer reef drop-offs, reef slopes, and reef faces. They are also found in silty bottom harbors, bays and shipwrecks with depths of 3-15 meters (about 10-15 feet).

These fish are aggressive and very territorial in nature, always patrolling the reef. Their diets consist of benthic algae or weeds, sponges, tunicates, and ascidians (sea squirts). Juveniles and sub-adults are found singly. Adults are usually found alone, but sometimes in pairs. No significant difference exists among the specimens from different geographical locations.

This species is successfully tank raised in captivity, first reported from Taiwan and now in the United States. The young specimens, 6 - 8 cm (2.4 - 3.1 inches) in length, are extremely hardy and available on a fairly regular basis at an affordable price. Also with no currently identified major threats, this species is listed as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List.

Identification

Adults are violet-blue with a large yellow blotch on the middle of the body. Scales on the forehead and nape have dark edges. Dorsal and caudal fins have yellow patches with light-blue markings. Dorsal and anal fins end in filaments. Juveniles have a dark blue body color with several white and pale blue bars along the sides (similar to P. asfur). A strong yellow band starts to appear when the juvenile reaches 6 cm (2.4 inches). As the juvenile grows, they lose their rounded dorsal and anal fins, which start to become more pointed, especially at the tip of the dorsal fin. The caudal fin is transparent. Full transformation to adult coloration occurs at a size from 10 to 15 cm (3.9 to 5.9 inches). They can change their coloration between darker and lighter intensities, especially noticeable in the brilliance of the blotch. They can grow up to 40 cm (15.7 inches) and some have even reported 50 cm (19.7 inches). The most common size is around 30 cm (11.8 inches).

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Figure 2. Pair of P. maculosus, about 5.5 inches / 13.75 cm

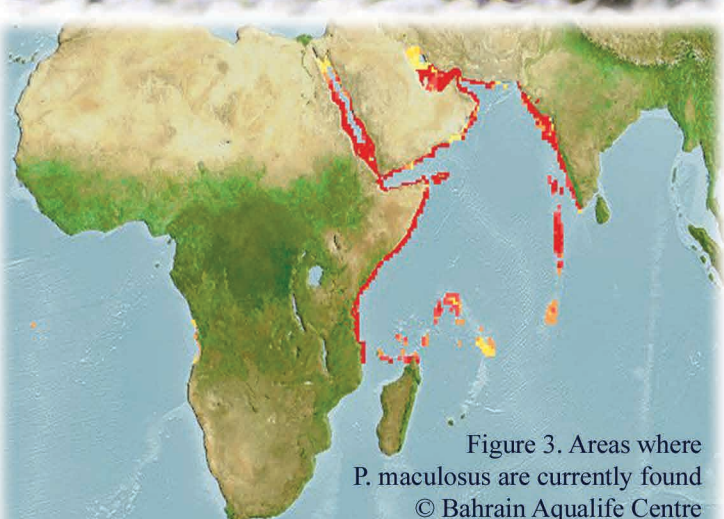


Figure 3. Areas where P. maculosus are currently found
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Figure 4. Juvenile Pomacanthus maculosus, about 3 inches / 7.5 cm.

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Aquarium Setup & Care

These fish can grow large and are fairly active. A minimum tank size of 750 liters (about 200 gallons) is necessary, although a tank closer to 1,100 liters (about 290 gallons) or more would be the ideal for a long, healthy, stress-free life, as well as, for a mated pair. Having a “grow out tank” for angelfish is not advisable.

The tank should have plenty of open swimming space and decorated with reef rocks where they can hide. There are no specific requirements on water movement and light, although moderate light to provide natural algae growth and light water movement are recommended. This fish is considered as “moderately hardy” when housed in the appropriately sized tank and fed a variety of foods.

pH Range : 8.1 - 8.4
Specific Gravity : 1.023 - 1.025
Minimum Tank Size : 200 gal (757 L)
Temperature : 72.0-81.0° F (22.2-27.2° C)

Social Behaviors

Pomacanthus maculosus in nature is generally a solitary fish, aggressive and very territorial. As juveniles they will patrol their area and will go after other angels that are the same color, as well as peaceful fish. As they get older, they do become less aggressive. Once angelfish are established, it is very hard to add other fish to the tank, especially other angelfish of similar coloration and size.

This fish is not 100% reef safe, since it will pick at live corals. A full blown reef is not generally recommended, but may be possible with careful selection and observation. Corals should be added first so the angelfish does not mistake the coral for food. Some suggestions are noxious soft corals like those from the Sinularia, Cladiella, Lemnalia, and Litophyton genera, and also mushroom corals. The yellowbar angelfish would not disturb an anemone that is well guarded by a clownfish, although they may sometimes nip at the oral disc.

Most other invertebrates are usually fine except for clams, oysters, scallops and feather dusters. Very small shrimp like Sexy Shrimp may be nipped at, but larger cleaner shrimp should be fine. Unfortunately, some invertebrates not bothered by a juvenile can later become the victim of an adult angel.

Food & Feeding

They are omnivores in the wild, eating mostly sponges, tunicates, and algae. In the aquarium, they will readily accept a wide variety of foods. Provide a varied diet that includes substantial vegetable foods, as well as sponge foods. This also includes frozen foods, flake foods, and various blanched vegetables to your fish's liking. Some meaty foods like Mysis shrimp and finely chopped fish/shrimp flesh can be given occasionally as a treat. Juveniles should be fed up to 3-4 times a day, but adults can be fed twice a day.

Breeding & Reproduction

This species is now regularly raised in captivity in Asia and the United States, producing offspring that are extremely hardy for aquarium keeping. In the wild, the Pomacanthus mating system changes depending on the density of the population at a particular location. In one sparsely populated area they may form permanent pairs while in other highly populated areas, they may form harems. Each harem consists of a male defending several females in a small area. In all systems however, these fish spawn in pairs. ♦

One gallon size treats 20,000 gallons / 75,700 L & 16 oz. size treats 2,500 gallons / 9,462.5 L of marine aquarium water. Available at aquarium stores worldwide. For information visit www.aquacraft.net

