

# LONG-NOSE BUTTERFLY

The Long-nose butterfly fish is of interest because of its unique shape and bright coloration. It is commonly collected and shipped from Hawaii to North America. This hardy aquarium pet can also be found naturally in the Indo-Pacific, Indian Ocean, Red Sea and off the coasts of Africa.

Characterized by a yellow body, a head that is black at the top and white at the bottom, a black spot on the anal fin, and of course a long thin mouth. In the mid 1970's, the Long-nose was thought to have three distinct species, but now there are 2 confirmed species, with an additional rarely seen colored phase. Aquarists must pay attention to some minor differences in order to distinguish and identify them.

*Forcipiger flavissimus* is the most common species found in the aquarium trade. The *F. flavissimus* is characterized with 10 or 11 spines. The *Forcipiger longirostris*, in comparison, has a longer nose and 12 dorsal spines. The *F. longirostris* is sometimes seen in a black or dark brown color phase. This rare collectors piece is sometimes called *F. inornatus*, although this name is not recognized as an official taxonomy classification. This color is variable and not permanent, because the fish may alternate gradually from yellow to black, and back and forth. Because the yellow color scheme usually returns when the fish is in captivity, researchers hypothesize the black phase may be for camouflage purposes. Divers and snorkelers may try their luck observing and catching these rare specimen off the Kona Coast of Hawaii.

The Long-nose gets its name from picking out food from small crevices (usually at live corals) on the reef. Thus, sometimes a fish-only marine aquarium would be a superior home than a reef safe aquarium for this fish. Once acclimated to captive marine aquarium living, the Long-Nose will happily accept a wide variety of foods, although the size of food must be small to accommodate their small mouths. However, the Long-nose is prone to defending their territory, so keeping one fish per tank is the smartest option. ♦



*Forcipiger flavissimus*



Transitional Coloration



*Forcipiger longirostris*

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