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[MARINE LIFE]

Horsing Around

I recently photographed these pygmy seahorses during a dive of Green Island, an off-shore island of Taiwan. This was taken at 8m, in a seagrass bed and at that time, there were strong currents. Is this the Coleman's pygmy seahorse?



Perry Kuo
Taipei, Taiwan

Congratulations, I believe that you have a new record for spotting a Coleman's Pygmy seahorse off Taiwan.

FEATURES: The original specimens were found at Lord Howe Island in the South Pacific in 2001 where it occurred in sea grass meadows in 3m of water. Since, it has been recorded from Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea in 2002 where it was found in the coralline algae *Halimeda* sp. It is now known to occur in Indonesia and other parts of the Asia/Indo-Pacific region.

The original specimens were yellow with gold spots, red map like scrawls on the body, red tassles on the spine and tail, and red bands on the tail.

Those found in the tropics appear to mimic the *Halimeda* sp's dead white leaves and are very white, with red map-like scrawls which became less intense along the spine. Tropical specimens are also flatter than those living in sea grass meadows. Some also have small red tassles.

The original specimens were around 22mm in size though those found in Papua New Guinea were only 12mm in size. Their food is thought to be small crustaceans which are picked up off the substrate they are on. I have observed them pecking up microscopic life from the sandy sea floor in sea grass meadows.

They only have a single gill opening situated just behind the back of the head, similar to other pygmy seahorses. It now appears that this species is distributed across a very wide area

and new records are only lacking due to them not being found yet in some of the popular diving areas. **AD**

Family:

Sygnathidae

Common Name:

Coleman's Pygmy Seahorse

Scientific Name:

Hippocampus colemani

Neville Coleman — an award-winning underwater natural history author — was recently honoured by The Diver's Hall of Fame in America for his contributions to diving education. For 30 years, Coleman has been recording the Indo-Pacific's flora and fauna, and has discovered more than 450 species of animals, and is the author of more than 60 wildlife guides and marine ID books. www.nevillecoleman.com.au