



## Playing In the Sandbox

*Fishinar 10/7/2014, Jonathan Lavan – Instructor*

### The top 12 Caribbean fish you will find in the sand

Photos taken from ReefNet's Interactive DVD and are used with permission

- **Sand Tilefish**- 1 to 1.5 ft., max 2 ft. Long, whitish body. Crescent shaped tail with dark area on upper central part of tail. Build burrows of rubble in sandy areas. Hover near entrances undulating long dorsal and anal fins.



- **Yellowhead Jawfish** – 2 to 3 in., max 4 in. Yellowish head. Rear dorsal, anal and tail fins have bluish tint. Ventral fins elongate. Inhabit areas of sand and coral near reefs. Hover vertically above burrow entrance picking plankton from current. Excavate borrows in the sand by mouth and males incubate eggs inside mouth. Back into holes tail first.



- **Green Razorfish** – 2.5 to 4 in., max 5.5 in. Margin of tail rounded. Male: dark spot (occasionally two) at midbody. Female: first to dorsal spines long, with pigmented tissue between and central spot. Hover above shallow sandy bottoms, often near rocks, gorgonians or other cover. Often curl body to blend with background. Dive into sand when alarmed.



- **Brown Garden Eel** – 8 to 15 in., max 20 in. Brown to gray head and upper body. Jutting lower jaw. Live in small to large colonies in sand near coral reefs. Extend only head and upper body from burrow.



- **Sand Diver**– 4 to 7 in., max 12 in. Dark spot at upper end of gill cover. Diamond markings on side often join bars on back. Rest on or bury themselves in sand, sometimes with only head visible. Highly predatory.



- **Yellow Goatfish**- 6 to 12 in., max 15.5 in. Yellow tail and midbody stripe. Red eye and prominent nose. Two barbels on chin can be folded back into grooves when not in use. Use barbels to dig in sand or rubble for food. Feed alone or congregate in small, often mixed-species groups; when not feeding, often hover in aggregations near reef structures.



- **Tobaccofish**- 3 to 4.5 in., max 7 in. Midbody is shades of orange to brown (tobacco color). Dark “U-shaped” border on tail. Inhabit sand and coral rubble areas near reefs. Tend to hover just above the bottom.



- **Chalk Bass** - 1.5 to 3 in., max 3.5 in. Series of pale and dark bars across back. Hover in small clusters just above sand and rubble bottoms.



- **Hovering Dartfish** – 2 to 4 in., max 5 in. Rounded tail; juvenile, notched yellow tail. Cream body and fins with yellow and red tints. May have faint yellow and blue markings. Hover just above slightly raised sand burrows. Dive head first into burrow when alarmed.



- **Yellowface Pikeblenny** – 2 to 3 in., max 3.5 in. Soda-straw like body with large pike-like jaws. Male has elevated foredorsal fin; first membrane with orange blotch over a black crescent (northern populations) or a black spot encircled with a white ring (in southern Caribbean populations). Inhabit sand, rubble and grassy areas, deeper than 20 ft. often occupy abandon worm tubes and form small colonies.



- **Yellowfin Mojarra**- 8 to 12in., max 16 in. Yellow ventral fins. Usually show several indistinct vertical bars on body. Solitary or form small groups. Swim and hover over sand near reefs.



- **Yellow Stingray** –8 to 12in., max 15 in. Numerous spots. Tips of wings rounded. Yellowish brown with numerous pale and dark spots and blotches; can change color or pale or darken dramatically. Inhabit sand especially near reefs. Lie on bottom often covered in sand.



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