



Seeing Red? Count On It!

Fishinar 1/21/2014, Jonathan Lavan – Instructor

The top 12 Squirrel & Cardinalfish of the Caribbean

Squirrels/Cardinals 101- This family of reddish fish with large “squirrel-like” eyes and a long pronounced rear dorsal fin that sticks up in a way reminiscent of a squirrel’s tail, are among the most striking on the reef. Its members all have thin white and occasional yellow-gold body stripes (with the exception of Soldierfish). While the squirrel and soldierfish have a spiny front and soft elongated rear dorsal the Glasseye Snapper has one continuous dorsal fin while all cardinalfish have two separate dorsal fins and can usually be identified by a number of black bar markings or black spots. All fish in this group tend to be more active in nocturnal hours although will be seen during the day in or around dark recesses or under ledges.

- **Squirrelfish**- 6 to 12 in., max 16 in. Yellowish front dorsal fin. Reddish with light silvery stripes and occasional white body patches. Largest and most common of the Squirrelfish.



- **Longspine Squirrelfish** – 5 to 10 in., max 12 in. Tops of dorsal spines have triangular white triangles like pennant flags (longspine = flagpole). Other markings very similar to Squirrelfish.



- **Longjaw Squirrelfish** – 4 to 6 in., max 7 in. More prominent jaw than other similar squirrelfish. Gold front dorsal fin with white tips and white spots at base of dorsal spines. Orangish gold body stripes. Unusually long anal fin spine. Becomes more abundant with depth.



- **Reef Squirrelfish** – 3.5 to 5 in., max 5.5 in. Black blotch on first dorsal fin runs from first to third or fourth dorsal spine. Dorsal fin with white tips and white spots at base of dorsal spines like Longjaw but body smaller and jaw less prominent.



- **Dusky Squirrelfish**– 3 to 5 in., max 7 in. Anal and tail fins bordered in brownish red to dark red. Red spots or markings between spines of foredorsal fin. Body usually dusky, bronze-red stripes alternate with wide silver stripes.



- **Blackbar Soldierfish**- 3.5 to 5.5 in., max 8.5 in. Blackbar behind head with no body stripes. Red dorsal fin has white marks at tips and a few along base. White borders on leading edge of ventral, anal, rear dorsal and tail fins.



- **Glasseye Snapper**- 7 to 10 in., max 1 ft. Always has silver bars on back which may be faint unlike similar Bigeye which never does. Usually shallower than Bigeye as well.



- **Belted Cardinalfish**- 1.25 to 2 in., max 2.5 in. Dark bar from rear dorsal fin to anal fin. Two bars at base of tail (may have darkish area between bars forming one wide bar with dark borders; a belt).



- **Barred Cardinalfish**- 1.5 to 3.5 in., max 4.5 in. Dark bar from rear dorsal fin to anal fin. Single dark bar at base of tail.



- **Flamefish**- 2 to 3.5 in., max 4.5 in. Two white lines across eye (flames). Dark spot behind eye. May also have dark spot under rear dorsal and dusky patch at base of tail.



- **Twospot Cardinalfish** – 1.5 to 3 in., max 4.5 in. Dark spot under base of rear dorsal fin. Second dark spot at base of tail. May have similar eye markings to Flamefish. Prefer silty, mucky areas.



- **Whitestar Cardinalfish** –1.5 to 2.5 in, max 3 in. Brilliant white spot, source of common name, just behind small dark blotch on back, at rear dorsal fin.



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