

***Arothron diadematus* (Rüppell 1829)**
Masked Puffer



Photo by J. Randall, Bishop Museum

Identification: Body shape is orbicular with short obtuse snout. Small spinules present on body excluding the snout and caudal peduncle. Rounded caudal fin. Body color is tan to brown with distinct dark banding around eyes resembling a mask. Dark spots or splotches sometimes occur on the body. Fins typically darker in color. Fins with no spines. A single short dorsal fin that sits far back on the body; a short anal fin under the dorsal. No pelvic fins. Grows to about 30 cm TL. From Randall (1983).

Similar Species: No Atlantic smooth pufferfishes (Family: Tetraodontidae) have dark mask on face.

Native Range: Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Ecology: The Masked Puffer closely resembles and is considered conspecific to *A. nigropunctatus* by some authors. The species inhabits coral-rich fringe reefs (Lieske and Myers 1994) and likely feeds on coral tips, some crustaceans, and mollusks (Myers 1999).

Nonindigenous Occurrences: The species was observed in 1994 near Delray Beach.

