

***Rhinecanthus verrucosus* (Linnaeus 1758)**
Blackbelly Triggerfish



Photo by J. Randall, Bishop Museum

Identification: Body compressed with protruding snout. Brown to light blue in color with white coloration below lateral line. Greyish brown dorsally. Three rows of forward-curving spines posteriorly on side of body along and anterior to caudal peduncle with the upper row shorter than the lower. Second dorsal fin and anal fin similar in shape. Large elliptical black spot located ventrally and mostly anterior to anal fin. Grows to about 23 cm TL. Dorsal fin III (23-26), anal fin 0 (21-23), pectoral fin (13-14). From Randall et al. (1996).

Similar Species: Queen Triggerfish (*Balistes vetula*) lacks dark elliptical body spot.

Native Range: The Blackbelly Triggerfish is distributed in the Indo-West Pacific from the Seychelles and Chagos islands to Vanuatu and south Japan to the Great Barrier Reef. From Allen et al. (2003).

Ecology: The Blackbelly Triggerfish is frequently found in lagoons and shallow waters of reef flats among macroalgae, rubble and coral among seagrasses (Lieske and Myers 1994; Bean et al. 2002). Juveniles frequent holes (Kuitert and Tonozuka 2001). Chen et al. (2001) reported that the species moves to the reef flat at high tide and returns to the sandy subtidal zone during low tide. This movement occurred when water depth fell below 40–60 cm. Adult Blackbelly Triggerfish are territorial, engaging in frequent agonistic behavior with other triggerfishes including *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* (Chen et al. 2001).

Nonindigenous Occurrences: The species was observed near Boca Raton in 1995.



Balistidae (triggerfishes)