



FOLLOW THAT OCTOPUS

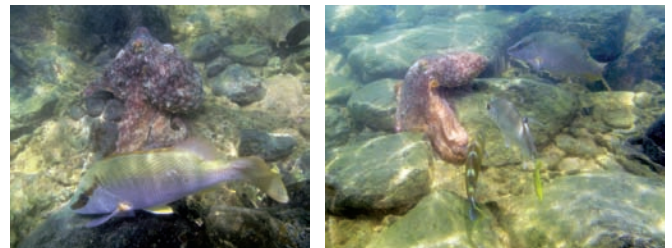
*This is the first record of an octopus (*Octopus insularis*) being followed by a dog snapper species (*Lutjanus jocu*). It is likely that similar food preferences and benthic foraging habits between the two species motivated this behaviour.*

One of the most common foraging associations between reef fish is known as 'nuclear-following' behaviour, where one species forages and causes bottom disturbance and other species opportunistically feed on exposed prey. It is a common interaction for carnivorous reef fish, but this function can be assigned to other reef animals, such as turtles, octopuses, sea stars, and hermit crabs. These interactions are important to reef trophodynamics, as they good opportunities for the follower species to prey on food that would be otherwise unavailable.

Octopuses are generalist predators with a broad diet mostly composed of small molluscs and crustaceans. Juvenile snappers also feed mainly either on benthic or water column crustaceans, while adults inhabit deeper areas feeding on benthic fish and crabs.

The octopus in question was seen foraging in October 2010, closely followed by the snapper, and several other reef fish species. The snapper followed for approximately 30 minutes, covering a distance of 40 m. Octopuses are cunning predators, exhibiting several coloration patterns and behavioural tactics to ambush prey under rocks and inside reef crevices. One of these is to insert its tentacles inside holes or to

First record of a dog snapper tailing a foraging octopus



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Pereira, P.H.C., De Moraes, R.L.G., Feitosa, J.L.L. & Padovani, B.F., 2011. 'Following the leader': first record of a species from the genus *Lutjanus* acting as a follower of an octopus. *Marine Biodiversity Records*, **4(e88)**. DOI:10.1017/S1755267211000856.

embrace rocks making prey flee into its mantle, avoiding them from escaping the attack. This kind of behaviour also exposes hidden prey to their followers. As the octopus efficiently feeds on hidden benthic prey, the chance to get an effortless meal missed by the predator is worthwhile for the snapper, sparing the effort of searching and ambushing the prey, it lets the octopus do all the hard work.