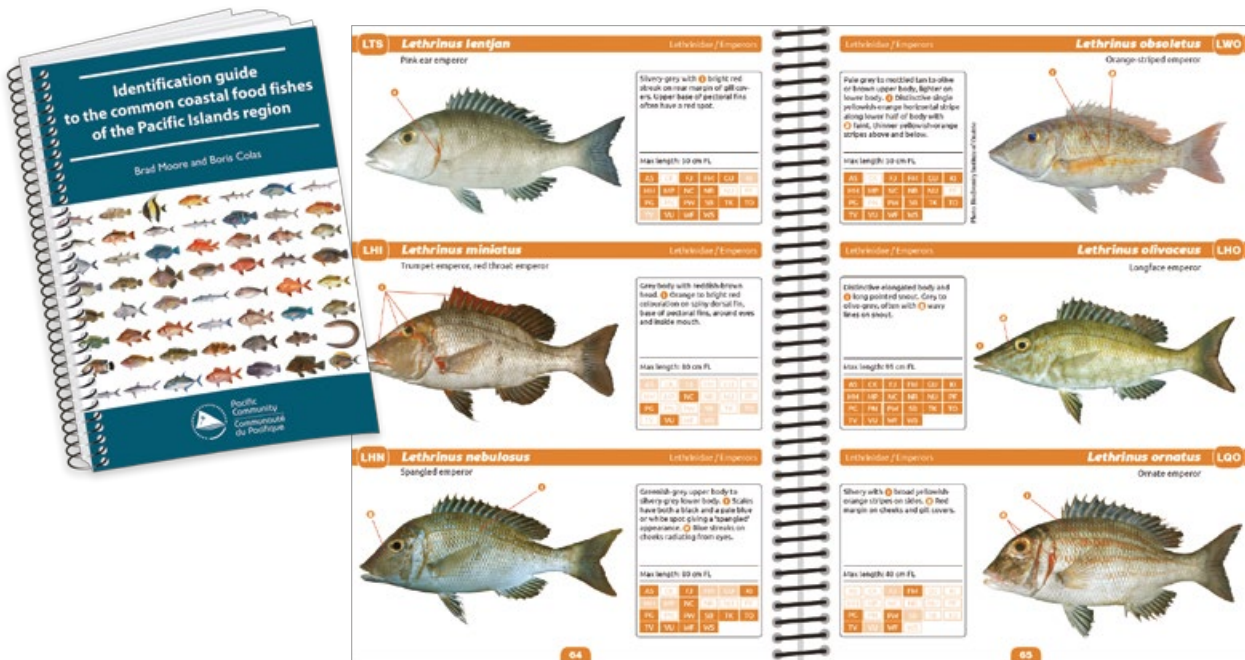


SPC releases new identification guide for coastal finfish

The new *Identification guide to the common coastal food fishes of the Pacific Islands¹* by Brad Moore and Boris Colas has been produced by the Pacific Community (SPC) to assist fisheries officers in the identification of the common coastal food fishes that are encountered in catches or during market surveys.



Catches of coastal finfish in the Pacific Islands region are typically characterised by a wide variety of species from many different taxonomic families. Often closely-related species exhibit vastly different life histories – particularly with respect to growth rates, maturity schedules and longevities, and thus may have vastly different vulnerabilities to fishing pressure. The guide will assist in accurately identify harvested species, which will improve the reporting of catches, the monitoring of coastal fisheries in the region and ultimately lead to more effective management.

The information included for each species consists of a high-resolution photo, the scientific and common English names, a description of the key identifying features that are additionally linked to the photo, the species' likely presence or absence for each individual Pacific Island country and territory, and, where relevant, notes on similar species, and the key features that can be used to distinguish these from each other.

As the guide is intended to aid fisheries officers in the identification of species that are encountered during their catch or market surveys, it was considered important to include photos of dead fish (where possible) – rather than underwater images – as these would be similar to the states and colours of fishes that officers will encounter during their surveys. While the bulk of the photos of each species were provided by renowned ichthyologist and fish photographer

John Randall, securing images for all species that are included in the guide proved to be major challenge; thereby, images were provided by researchers and amateur fish photographers from locations as far afield as Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States.

The guide has been produced with financial assistance from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the European Union through the 'Scientific Support for the Management of Coastal and Oceanic Fisheries in the Pacific Islands Region' ('SciCOFish') project.

Copies of the waterproof guide, which contains approximately 320 of the most commonly targeted coastal sharks, rays and bony fishes, will be distributed to fisheries agencies across the region.

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¹ <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/en/publications/465>