

# The Fish Artists

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Most of us take for granted the illustrations of fish that complement taxonomic works and other reference books about fish. At best, we might remark that the colors are not always accurate, although that may be an artifact of photographing and processing for publication or of our misconceptions rather than the artist's error.

Depicting the shape, color and scale pattern of a fish is an exacting task, requiring research and patience. Some artists work on research or fishing boats to note the colors of fish as they come out of the water and record these with detailed color codes on sketches, completing the work afterwards in the studio.

**Stanley Meltzoff** was born in 1917. He entered the US Army in World War II as an art historian and left it as an artist-journalist with *Stars and Stripes*. He is well known for his illustrations in *National Geographic*, *Scientific American* and other major magazines. Stanley had been diving long before scuba gear was developed and was the first to dive in many places, seeing wild animals undisturbed and unfamiliar with humans. His paintings of these underwater scenes were only later popularized. They capture moving fish in taxonomic detail and have won him several prizes.

The number of scales, fins and rays must also be accurate. It is usually necessary to work with a taxonomist to ensure that no features are misrepresented or missing. Color variations occur in many fish. Which to choose?

The advantages of a fish painting over a photograph are many. Usually the fish photographed is dead, so its color has probably changed; the fins have to be propped up and damage often occurs. In life, a fish rarely extends its fins -- especially not for a photographer -- as they are depicted for scientific purposes.

Artists have had a long association with ichthyology as eloquently described by Peter Whitehead (p.3). Carl George

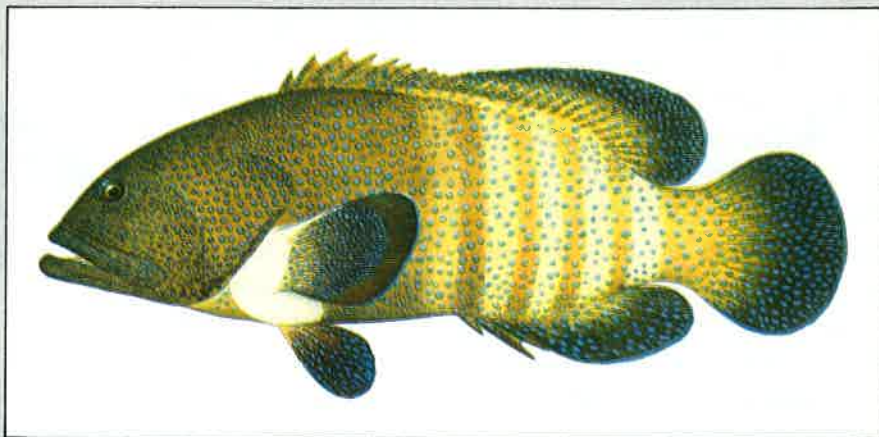
and colleagues, in a recent article about the rediscovery of a series of New York State fish illustrations (*Fisheries* 11(6):2-11 (1986)), describe the illustrations as a "resource important to fisheries biologists, other natural historians and natural history illustrators." Their article, incidentally, provides suggestions on looking after and preserving these important resources.

In these pages, we would like to introduce and pay tribute to those artists familiar to us -- there are certainly others we have not contacted -- and hope that the examples of their work may encourage others to follow in their footsteps. ●

Sailfish by Stanley Meltzoff



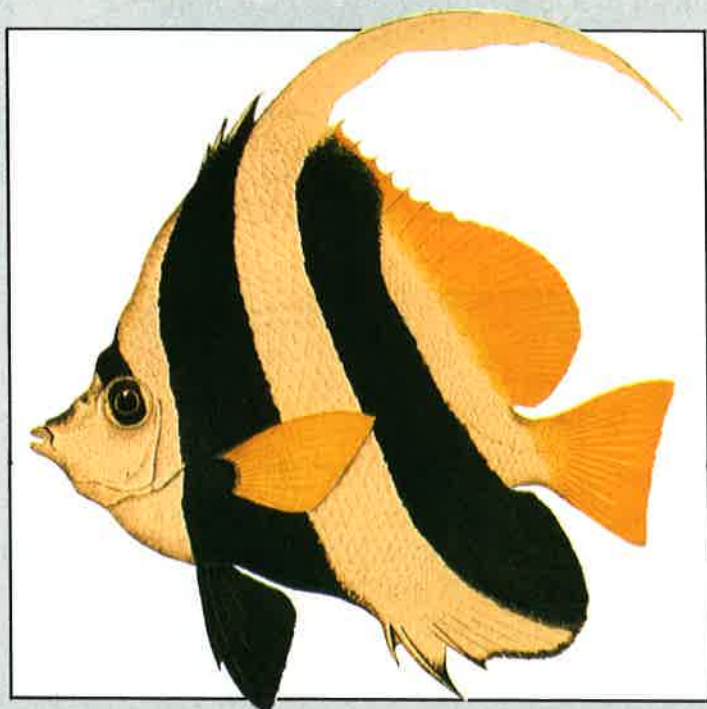
**Roger Swainston** was born in England in 1960 and grew up near the Western Australian wheatbelt town of Yealering. Family fishing trips along the south coast developed an early interest in angling and marine biology. Roger worked as a deckhand on prawn trawlers in northern Australia before gaining a B.Sc. in Zoology from the University of Western Australia in 1981. He worked voluntarily at the Western Australian museum for several years participating in fish taxonomic studies and field trips before devoting his efforts to full-time freelance illustration.



*Cephalopholis argus* by Roger Swainston

He has illustrated many scientific papers on a diverse range of subjects, and several books and has illustrated and co-published "Sea Fishes of Southern Australia". Roger is currently working on the paintings for a complete guide to the

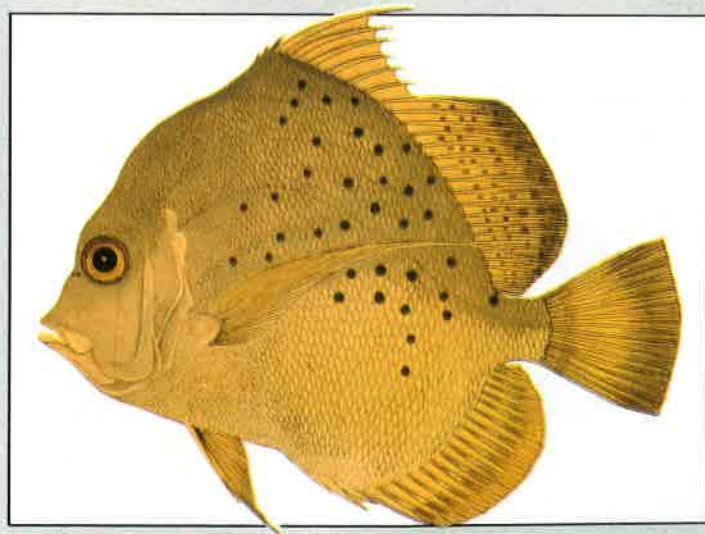
sharks and rays of Australia as well as a series of large underwater scenes to be produced as limited edition prints.



*Heniochus acuminatus*  
by George Coates

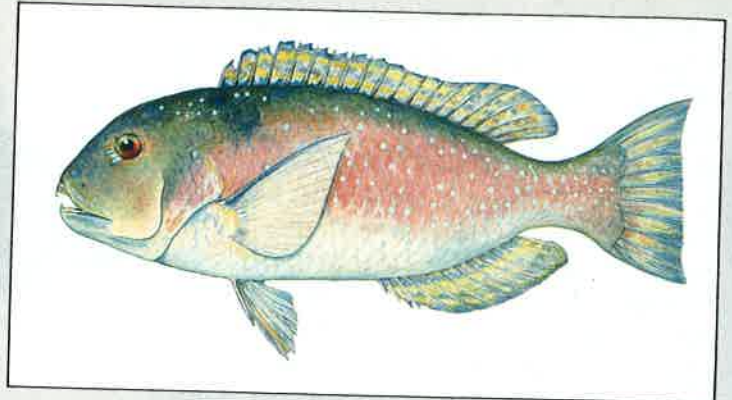
**George Coates** was a skilled Australian fisherman born around 1900 with a deep interest in fish. His drawings began as a hobby. In the 1950s he arranged publication of booklets on fish and fishing which became very popular in Townsville, where he spent most of his life. George illustrated several books on Queensland and Great Barrier Reef fish. He was still collecting specimens in the 1970s and painting fine watercolors, as well as dissecting out tiny otoliths (ear bones) from small reef fish for an American colleague.

*Drepane punctata*  
by Yeap Tho Seng

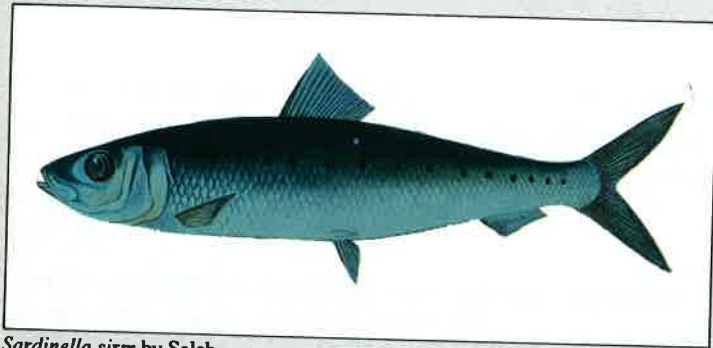


**Yeap Tho Seng**, a 46-year old Malaysian artist, is attached to the Fisheries Research Institute, Glugor, Penang. He has specialized in painting fish and other aquatic animal life for more than 25 years. Mr. Yeap has illustrated several large posters of fish for the Malaysian Department of Fisheries.

**Frank Olsen** is another Australian artist. Born in 1918, he underwent formal art education in Sydney and for a number of years was employed in the Queensland Fisheries Service, where he became well known for his fish illustrations. Numerous examples of his work appear in Australian books on fish. He also paints landscapes and seascapes which are in private collections in several countries. One fish painting was selected for presentation to the Crown Prince of Japan. He lives at 134 Englehill Rd., Oxley, Queensland 4075, Australia.



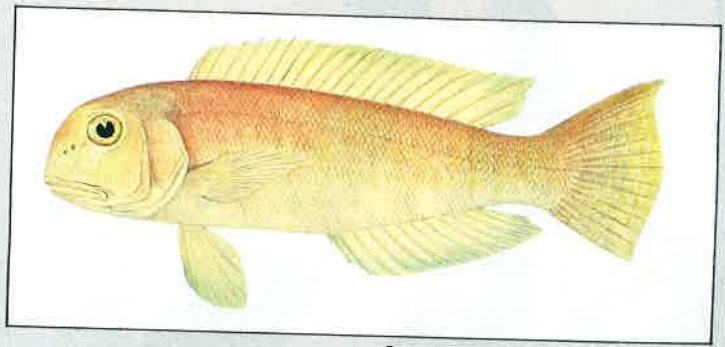
*Scarus* sp. by Frank Olsen



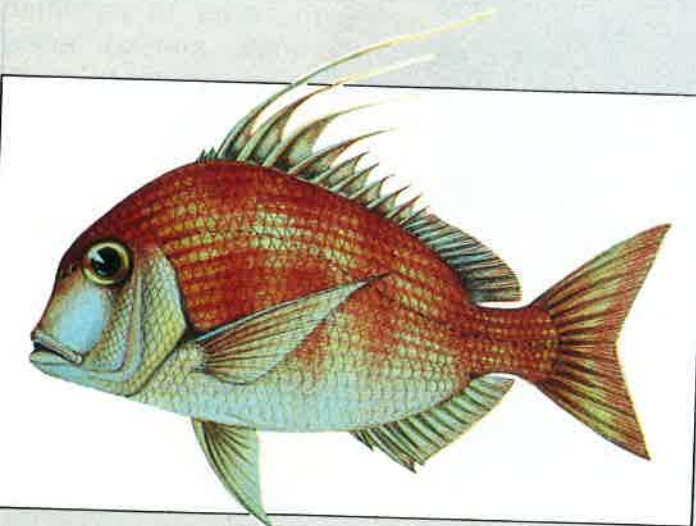
*Sardinella sirm* by Saleh

**Mr. Saleh** is the Indonesian counterpart of Mr. Yeap in Malaysia. Saleh has painted all the commercial fish of Indonesia for Fisheries Department posters, giving each species an interesting, Indonesian touch. He works at the Indonesian Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Jalan Krapu 12, Sunda Kelapa, Jakarta.

**Tang Ying-Wei** paints fish and botanical subjects in Hong Kong. He received his art education in China and taught at art colleges in Hangchow and Canton during his early years. After World War II he began working for the Hong Kong government as an artist, a post he held for 40 years. Recently retired, he continues to paint for the Hong Kong Botanic Gardens and at the Kadoorie Extension Farm (Lam Kam Rd., Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong), where he now lives.



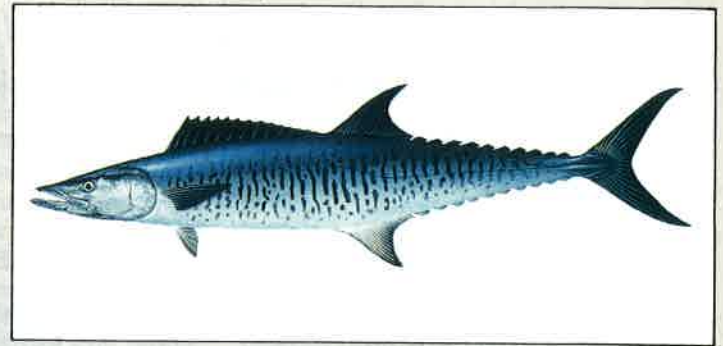
*Branchiostegus* sp. by Tang Ying-Wei



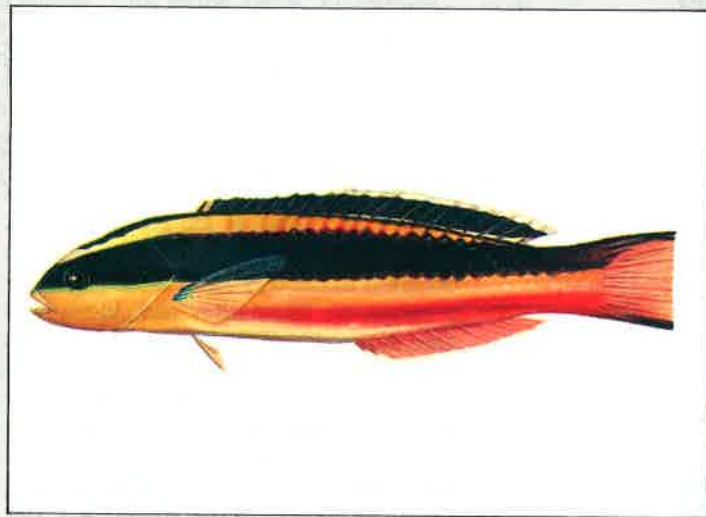
*Argyrops spinifer* by Jeera Toojinda

**Jeera Toojinda**, the only lady in this group, painted the several hundred species of fish and invertebrates that appear on posters of Thai aquatic fauna issued by the Department of Fisheries, Thailand.

**Gavin Ryan** has illustrated not only fish books but also Australian postage stamps of fish as well as children's books with a variety of creatures. Unlike most fish artists he uses air-brush techniques to add a third dimension to his subjects without losing detail. In subject matter he follows in the footsteps of **Robert Ingpen**, who painted the fish for the Australian fish poster as well as other aquatic subjects in Australia and Peru. Like Gavin Ryan, Robert has illustrated postage stamps and illustrates and writes books on mythological creatures for both adults and children.



*Scomberomorus commerson* by Gavin Ryan

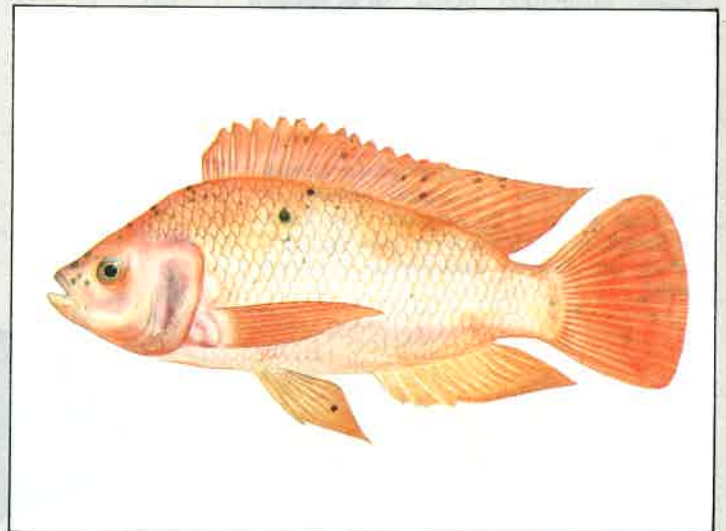


*Thalassoma lucasanum* by Alex Kerstitch

**Alex Kerstitch** is a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Arizona. His graduate work, however, was in biological oceanography and he now combines both as a Research Associate at the University of Arizona. Alex has written as well as illustrated several books on American fish. His photography has earned him several major natural history category awards, while his scientific zeal has resulted in the discovery of new species of shrimps, gastropods and a nudibranch. He lives at 10700 E. Calle Vaqueros, Tucson, Arizona 85749, USA.

And of course, last but not the least is Naga's very own, **Ovidio ("Jun") Espiritu**. Jun, the lone Filipino artist on the list, finished Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of the East (Manila). He freelanced for a while, painting and mounting exhibits with other artists, before getting a part-time contract with ICLARM in 1981. Obviously pleased with his work, ICLARM decided to hire him the following year as full-time staff artist for its Publications Section.

Many of Jun's paintings of fish and fisheries-related subjects in watercolor (his favorite medium) have illustrated the covers and inside pages of Naga and ICLARM's annual reports. Jun sometimes also does oils, as well as figure and landscape paintings. He is an active member of the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) and the Angono Artists' Association.



Red tilapia by Jun Espiritu