

Parupeneus porphyreus » Kūmū « Whitesaddle Goatfish

'Apelila (April) 2020 | Hawaiian Lunar Months: Welo - Ikiiki

Ka Hō'ike 'Ano - Description

- » The only shallow-water goatfish species endemic to Hawai'i.
- » Can be grayish purple, greenish, or reddish, but almost always has a small white spot, or saddle, above the tail base.
- » Pale streaks along the body above and below the eyes are another identifying mark.
- » It feeds at night and is often resting by day, alone or in small groups.
- » Juveniles sometimes occur in tide pools.
- » They can grow up to about 15 inches or 38 centimeters.¹



Nā Pae Ulu – Growth Stages

- » Kolokolopā or mākolokolopā is the tiny stage of kūmū.
- » 'Ahuluhulu is the name of a juvenile kūmū.
- » Kūmū a'e is the stage when young kūmū are in the process of transforming into an adult kūmū.
- » Kūmū is the term for adults.³



Cultural Significance - Ka Waiwai Ho'oilina

- » The kūmū was used extensively as offerings to gods when priests demanded red fish. It was inappropriate offering when a canoe was launched, sometimes in hula ceremonies, and sometimes during atonements of wrongdoings.²
- » The word "kūmū" is similar to the word "kumu", which can mean foundation, source, purpose, tree, and teacher. These are related concepts in Hawaiian worldview. When a potential student wanted to learn from a kumu (teacher) they would provide a kūmū fish with their request. If and when the student's learning was complete, the teacher would return a kūmū fish to the student.³
- » Hawaiian culture recognizes relationships from mauka to makai, from upland to the sea. Kūmū is also a variety of red-stalked kalo (taro). Hawaiians developed over 200 varieties of kalo and the kumu sub-varieties include 'ele'ele (black), kea (white), kū loa poni (long purple stem), 'ula'ula (red), and welowelo lā, a wild fragrant variety also cultivated dry in Puna, Hawai'i. A photo of the kūmū 'ula'ula variety is pictured to the right.

Hawaiian & Local Slang – Ka Palaualea Kama'āina



- » Kūmū are prized fish. The word "kūmū" is a Local (kama'āina) slang for a good-looking or handsome person, especially a sweetheart. It is a slang in both 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) and Hawai'i Creole English usually called "Pidgin" in Hawai'i.³

