

# School kids name new reef fish

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Primary school children in Sydney have named a newly identified species of reef fish, recently described by a University of Sydney ichthyologist.

The [fish](#)'s stripy markings have earned it the moniker *tigrellus* (little tiger), at the suggestion of students who visited the Macleay Museum's booth at the Australian Museum's Science Festival Expo last year.

A specimen of the fish - collected in the southern Red Sea by a Russian colleague - was sent to the Macleay Museum's natural history curator and resident ichthyologist Dr Tony Gill earlier in the year. Although similar to the existing *Xenisthmus* genus the specimen lacked scales, leading Dr Gill to create a new genus. He named it *Gymnoxenisthmus* (from the Greek *gymnos*, meaning naked) but couldn't settle on a species name.

Dr Gill took the opportunity to enlist help from primary-school students attending August's Expo, inviting them to suggest and vote on names based on the fish's appearance. Among labels touted were *kofta*, *bongo*, *candy cane*, *Pippy Longstockings* and *tiger*. In the end *little tiger* (*tigrellus*) won the vote and the new species *Gymnoxenisthmus tigrellus* has just been named in the journal *Zootaxa*.

*Gymnoxenisthmus tigrellus* is from the gobioid fish family *Xenisthmidae*. Dr Gill has named half of the 14 *xenisthmid* species discovered so far alongside about a third of the 150 known species in another [reef-fish](#) family (the *dottybacks*, family *Pseudochromidae*).

"This indicates how recently many of these reef fish have been discovered," says Dr Gill. Each year around 400-500 new [fish species](#) are discovered, with most coming from coral-reef and freshwater habitats. Efforts are also made to understand the distribution and abundance of each species, but our understanding is usually very limited.

"Without knowing the populations of most reef [species](#) we don't know how much human activity is impacting on them."

**More information:** Read about *Gymnoxenisthmus tigrellus* here: [www.mapress.com/zootaxa/2014/f/zt03755p495.pdf](http://www.mapress.com/zootaxa/2014/f/zt03755p495.pdf)

Provided by University of Sydney

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