

Study: Butterflyfish may face extinction

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An Australian-U.S. study suggests the black, white and yellow butterflyfish admired by eco-tourists and aquarium keepers might be at risk of extinction.

Morgan Pratchett of James Cook University said the case of the Chevroned Butterflyfish is a stark example of how human pressure on the world's coral reefs is confronting certain species with "blind alleys" from which they may be unable to escape.

Pratchett, affiliated with the Australian Research Council's Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, along with Michael Berumen of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in the United States warn that the highly specialized nature of the feeding habits of the butterflyfish make it an extinction risk as the world's coral reefs continue to degrade due to human over-exploitation, pollution and climate change.

Pratchett and Berumen said theirs is one of the few studies so far to consider the evolutionary and ecological basis of dietary versatility, and has implications for the fate of specialized feeders throughout the animal kingdom.

The study is reported in the journal *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*.

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