

Female seahorses essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Of the many fish of the sea, none is more interesting and unique than the seahorse. Seahorses are classified in the phylum Chordata, subphylum Vertebrata, class Osteichthyes, order Gasterosteiformes, family Syngnathidae, and the genus Hippocampus. The genus name Hippocampus comes from two Greek words; hippos meaning horse and campus meaning monster.

Their physical appearance explains why they received their name. They have a horse-like head and a curled tail. They have developed many unique adaptations such as mobile eyes and a long snout that help them survive in the seas and oceans. The most interesting thing about seahorses to most people though, is that the male becomes pregnant. Many people are fascinated by the seahorse and they begin to keep them as pets.

Because of their removal from the ocean for this reason and many others such as Chinese medicine and beach souvenirs, they have become highly demanded throughout the world and thus have become somewhat endangered. Seahorses are marine fish that are very small when you compare them to many other animals in the ocean. They range in size from 1. 6-20 cm and vary in color from shades of red, orange, yellow, gray, and green. They can also have patterns covering their body like zebra stripes or spots.

They are part of the vertebra group which means they have an interior skeleton. Their bodies are covered in armored plates for protection. These plates also serve as ribs and are probably a derivative of scales. Seahorses breathe through gills and do not have a tail fin like other fish.

Seahorses have a dorsal fin on their backs that propels them forward through the water upright and moves almost as fast as hummingbird's wings. The dorsal fin can move up to seventy times per minute! The seahorses' pectoral fins near their neck are very important and are used for turning and steering. The coronet found on the top of a seahorse's head is as distinctive to each seahorse as thumbprints are to humans. Seahorses do not have a stomach so they must eat large amounts of food each day to survive. Seahorses feed on daphnia, cyclops, plankton, worms, larval fish, amphipods which are small, shrimp-like crustaceans, and other invertebrates and microorganisms. They have no teeth to chew their food but one seahorse can eat up to three thousand brine shrimp per day.

Male seahorses can be distinguished from female seahorses by their smooth, white, lower abdomen (pouch). They mostly live between the fifty degrees north and fifty degrees south latitude lines in temperate and tropical water near the coasts in sea grass, sea weed, mangroves, microalge, and coral reefs. Wild seahorses are thought to live about one to five years depending on species. Spending many years in the ocean, seahorses have developed special adaptations that help them survive. For example, some are partially transparent and others can camouflage themselves. These properties allow seahorses to escape and hide from their prey in a safe place like seaweed.

Some seahorses have leaf-like appendages that help them to hide in and blend in with the color of kelp beds. All of these adaptations help the seahorse to hide from prey. A few seahorses are poisonous; thus, making them a danger to some of their predators. Their natural predators consist of crabs, tuna, skates, and sting rays to name a few. Seahorses also have small

fins that help them to move through thick water vegetation easily. If their fins were any larger, they may get caught and tangled in the thick sea grass.

They also have highly mobile eyes that move independent of each other. Their wide range of motion makes it much easier to watch for prey in an ocean where light can sometimes be scarce. Another adaptation they have developed is their long tubular jaws like a snout that they use to suck up their food. Seahorses are ambush predators and they use their snout to suck up their prey whole. When their prey comes close, the seahorse can snap it up from up to an inch and a half away.

One of the most beneficial adaptations of a seahorse is its tail. They use their long, prehensile tail to curl around support structures and underwater plants such as seaweed and coral to prevent being moved by the current and also to rest. Though these many adaptations are very interesting, nothing is more out of the ordinary than the reproductive process of seahorses. The most attention grabbing fact about seahorses is that the male is impregnated.

Most people find this hard to believe because females are always the ones who carry their young until birth. Of all animals, seahorses are the only species in which the male has the babies. Some female seahorses compete with each other for the male mating partners. The female still makes the eggs though. Because she does not have to nourish and feed babies, it allows her to make eggs more rapidly. Once the female makes the eggs, she inserts them into the male's pouch where he fertilizes them.

The eggs are then covered in tissue and stay with the dad until birth.

Seahorse pregnancies tend to last from two to three weeks in length and

reoccur rapidly. Labor can last up to three hours sometimes leaving the dad very weak. Their offspring are exact miniatures of their parents. They also become independent of their parents immediately upon birth.

About fifty are released from the father's pouch after pregnancy. Typically only two offspring out of thousands will make it to adulthood. Most are eaten by many other fish and sometimes the dad may eat them as well to replenish the nutrients he lost during pregnancy. Many differences can be made about seahorses and humans when it comes to reproduction but there are some similarities when it comes to their relationships, social behavior, and social interactions with one another. For example, most seahorse species are monogamous.

They are very loyal marine fish. They will stay with the same mate for their entire lives until one passes away. Another interesting fact is that seahorses show displays of courtship to each other in the mornings and evenings and they spend the daytime hunting for food apart from each other. Humans tend to do the same thing. They remind each other of their bond as a couple in the morning and evening but during the day they go off to work apart from each other. Because seahorses are such fascinating creatures, some are taken from the wild as pets.

Humans buy seahorses and put them into tanks. Most of them do not survive well in tanks and aquariums because of the abrupt transition from the ocean. Wild seahorses only eat live food such as brine shrimp and in great numbers. Because they are such picky eaters, they are harder to care for. They are

also prone to stress in an aquarium, and it lowers their immune system efficiency. They are, therefore, more susceptible to disease.

Captive breeding of seahorses is becoming more popular now. It is more expensive to purchase a captive bred seahorse but they survive much better in tanks and as pets. They also do not require live brine; they will eat frozen sea lice (mysid). The most popular captive bred seahorses recommended for beginners are Zulu-lulus, Mustangs, and Pixies. Seahorses should be kept in tanks alone if at all possible because they are slow feeders.

If put in a tank with faster fish, they will not get sufficient nutrients and they will eventually starve to death. They can, however, coexist happily with shrimp and other bottom feeders such as fish from the goby family. Fast and ferocious fish such as eels, triggerfish, squid, and sea anemones, to name a few, are very dangerous to seahorses and should not be put in tanks with them. No one really knows the exact number of seahorses in the ocean but we do know that they are in high demand on land. China and Singapore are the principle importers of seahorses both living and dried.

The Chinese catch twenty million per year alone. They caught roughly seventy tons in two thousand and two. They use seahorses for medicine and herbology. Typically, dried seahorses are ground into a powder and combined with herbs to treat many ailments. The Chinese believe seahorses can treat asthma, cure impotency, lower cholesterol, and heal arteriosclerosis.

They are also considered quite a delicacy in cooking. In other places around the world, seahorses are used as souvenirs at beaches. They are dried and

<https://assignbuster.com/female-seahorses-essay/>

used for key chains, jewelry, glass domes, paperweight decorations, and many other crafts. They are also unfortunately caught as “ bycatch” by huge shrimp nets which can eliminate a great deal of seahorses at one location.

As of May, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) protected all thirty-four known species of seahorses. Now, any country that engages in the trade of seahorses must show that it will not put the wild population at risk. Seahorse traders are now also required to have permits to trade them. A minimum size limit on seahorses now guarantees that the young members of populations can still live freely and reproduce. Although CITES protects seahorses against humans, they still have no control over the effects of mother nature on them.

Because they live in endangered aquatic ecosystems such as estuaries, mangrove stands, sea grasses, sea weeds, lagoons, and coral reefs, they are subject to habitat destruction. Storms though are the number one natural killer of seahorses. During dangerous and rough storms, they are torn from their holdfasts and cast ashore or die of exhaustion because they have no place to grip with their tail and rest. Most of the time, their homes in the sea grasses or kelp beds are destroyed by the storms as well. Overall, it is important to remember that although beautiful and interesting, eahorses are meant to live in the ocean.

Making them pets and using them for non-tested medicine, or any other commercial use for that matter, is cruel. These creatures are meant to exist in the wide open ocean where their beauty can really be studied, observed,

and enjoyed. Works Cited Bowe, Rebecca. "The last roundup? Seahorses struggle for survival.

" E Date: 9/1/2004 " Sea Horse," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2007 http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761564901/Sea_Horse.html " Sea Horse.

" <http://goodnightstories.com/wildlife/fish/card8.htm> SEAHORSE. , The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition 2006 " Seahorse. " <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seahorse>.

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm

" Seahorse Basics. " Nova. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/seahorse/basics.html> " Seahorse. " <http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/sea-horse.html> " Seahorses. " <http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/facts/seahorses.htm> " Why Seahorses? " <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/why.html> " Wildlife Trade> Seahorses. " http://www.worldwildlife.org/trade/seahorse_facts.cfm