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an **Animal**



**LINED  
SEAHORSE**

*Hippocampus erectus*

# SEAHORSE | *Hippocampus erectus*

CLASS: Actinopterygii | ORDER: Syngnathiformes | FAMILY: Syngnathidae

## PROFILE

**Favorite treat:** Mysis shrimp

**Weight:** 7 ounces

**Conservation status:** Near Threatened

**ARE SEAHORSES FISH?** Yes! The seahorse is one of the most unique looking fish found in the ocean with a horse-like head, a monkey-like tail and a kangaroo-like pouch. They have a few things in common with chameleons as well - they can move their eyes around, and change their skin color! Rings of bony plates cover the lined seahorse's body, which grows 5 to 6 inches in length. It has a long snout with a small, toothless mouth at the end and a tapered, grasping tail without a fin at the tip.

**GONE FISHING.** Seahorses have a voracious appetite and will eat for up to 10 hours a day consuming more than 3,000 crustaceans during that time. Seahorses are predators. They ambush their prey by changing colors

to match their surroundings and wrapping their prehensile tail around sea grass or coral to stay very still. The seahorse then sucks in prey like zooplankton and microscopic shrimp through its long, tubular snout. Can you imagine if you could just vacuum up cheeseburgers with your mouth?!

**WHERE IN THE WORLD?** They live all over the world in parts of the ocean that aren't too deep or too cold. You can also find seahorses in "estuaries" - places where salty ocean water meets fresh river water. You can find them in seagrass beds, mangrove forests, coral reefs and other shallow coastal habitats. Humans often pollute and destroy shallow coastal habitats, which can be a big problem for seahorses.

## FUN FACTS

All seahorses belong to the genus *Hippocampus*, a combination of the Greek words for "horse" and "sea monster".

Seahorses growl, click and purr! They often make noise when eating or greeting their mate.

There are 44 seahorse species.  
For now, at least!

**HORSING AROUND.** Seahorses are monogamous, meaning they will have only one mate during their lifetime. In the mornings, partner seahorses may say "Good morning!" by dancing together for several minutes, then parting to go about their day! During an elaborate 8-hour mating dance, seahorses will change color as they spin around, sometimes with tails entwined. A seahorse is the only male in the animal kingdom to carry his unborn young and give live birth of up to 2,000 babies.