

Seven Things You Need to Know About the Thorny Seahorse

By Dave Harasti



1

The thorny seahorse is a member of the 'Syngnathidae' family which includes all seahorses, pipefishes, pipehorses and seadragons. Animals in the syngnathidae family are also closely related to ghost pipefish (Solenostomidae) and sea moths (Pegasidae).

2

Its distribution is very broad as it is known to occur throughout the tropical Indo-Pacific. It has been recorded in the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

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The only records of the species in mainland Australian waters have both been from Port Stephens in New South Wales. Two small females were observed in 2007 and 2009, which appear to have followed "Nemo's" adventure and travelled down on the East Australian Current from warmer tropical waters.

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This species is easily recognised by the thorny appendages covering its body and it also has a rather long snout and long head spines. The ends of the spines often have dark tips.

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The colour of this seahorse species is highly variable. It ranges in colour from bright yellow to pale pink or green to match the habitat that it is living on. Yellow thorny seahorses are often observed with small yellow gorgonian fans whilst darker animals can be seen with red and grey sponges and corals.

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The thorny seahorse is generally seen in depths below 15 metres where it lives amongst corals and sponges in rubble bottomed areas. It is occasionally found inhabiting shallow sheltered reefs or seagrass beds and is sometimes seen amongst clumps of algae.

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The thorny seahorse grows to a maximum length of approximately 17 cm.