



Why Care About Seahorses?

We love seahorses because they are weird, wacky, charming fish. Their unique shape and unusual behavior such as couples holding tails or males giving birth, appeal to people's hearts. We truly believe if we save seahorses, we can save the seas. We share with you some of our favorite facts in hopes that you too will be charmed to take action for these unusual fish.

Seahorse biology: weird & wonderful

- 42 different species, belonging to the genus Hippocampus
- Unusual shape
- Snout like a horse, tail like a monkey & males have pouches like kangaroos
- Males become pregnant
- Seahorse couples 'greet' each other every day & hold tails
- All these unusual traits help us to expand our understanding of reproductive ecology

Seahorse ecology: strong relationships with habitat

- Live in many important coastal habitats like seagrasses, mangroves, reefs & estuaries
- Once they find a place to call home, they become long-term residents.
- Important predators on bottom-dwelling organisms
- Removing them may disrupt coastal ecosystems
- Their strong links with habitat make them representative symbols of these places and for issues about marine conservation. Protections for seahorses benefit many other marine species and ecosystems.

Seahorse have economic value

- Global trade for aquaria, traditional medicine, and curios
- Involves 86 countries and 31 species
- Important source of income and food security for subsistence fishers

What threats do seahorses face?

From our research we know that their biology and behaviour — for example, the young depend on parental survival far longer than most fish, and many species are seasonally monogamous — makes them particularly susceptible to overfishing, habitat loss, and other human pressures. We estimate tens of millions are internationally traded each year. For some species, these pressures have placed their populations under threat.



Here is what we know about the seahorses of India:

- At least 7 known species found along the Indian coastline:
H.camelopardalis, H.histrix, H.kelloggi, H.kuda, H.mohnikei, H.spinosissimus, H.trimaculatus.
- Of the 7 species - 5 listed as vulnerable and 2 data-deficient on the International Conservation Union (IUCN) Red List (measure of risk of extinction).
- Traded for use, mainly as curios and for Traditional Chinese medicine
- India was amongst the top 4 exporters of seahorses until 2001, exporting an estimated 10 tons of seahorses per year.
- In 2001, seahorses were included under Schedule I of India’s Wild Life Protection Act of 1972, that prohibits their catch and trade, little known about abundance and distribution since then.
- incidentally caught in trawls, drag nets, shore seines & other fisheries in India, particularly in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay, located along the Southeast coast of India.
- The global conservation status of *H. camelopardalis* and *H. mohnikei* is Data-Deficient. This means we do not have enough information globally about where they live and the threats they face to identify conservation concern.
- All species are known to inhabit seagrass beds as well as other habitats.

Seahorse species found in India and their global conservation status

Species	Common Name	Global Conservation Status
<i>Hippocampus camelopardalis</i>	Giraffe seahorse	Data-deficient
<i>Hippocampus histrix</i>	Spiny seahorse	Vulnerable
<i>Hippocampus kelloggi</i>	Great seahorse	Vulnerable
<i>Hippocampus kuda</i>	Yellow seahorse	Vulnerable
<i>Hippocampus mohnikei</i>	Japanese Seahorse	Data-Deficient
<i>Hippocampus spinossisiumus</i>	Hedgehog seahorse	Vulnerable
<i>Hippocampus trimaculatus</i>	Three-spot seahorse	Vulnerable