



Facts

What they are

Fish

Length, weight, lifespan, number of offspring

Length: 2-35cm

Lifespan: 1-4yrs

Weight: 200-500g

Offspring: 50-1500 eggs every four weeks

Where they live

They live in shallow tropical and temperate water near to coasts. They live in sheltered areas where they can get protection from predators, such as in seagrass beds, estuaries, coral reefs and mangroves.

Food chain

Seahorses eat plankton, algae, tiny fish and shellfish. Animals that eat seahorses include crabs, rays and larger fish, as well as seabirds.

Threats

There are about 36 species of seahorse. Eight of these are threatened. The most endangered seahorse is the Cape seahorse, which lives in just a few estuaries in South Africa. The biggest threat to the Cape seahorse is water pollution. Pollution is also a threat to all of the other types of seahorse.

Huge numbers of seahorses are caught and killed each year to use as souvenirs and in traditional Chinese medicine. Many are caught alive to use as aquarium fish. Most seahorses that are taken from the wild to sell to aquarium stores do not live very long, so buying seahorses for your aquarium is not good.

Seahorses are also often caught up in fishing nets, especially by shrimp boats. These boats drag huge nets along coastal areas off of Florida, Mexico, Central America, and South America.

You may be surprised to learn that cutting down forests on land is also a threat to seahorses. Cutting down trees causes the soil to wash away and go via rivers into estuaries and coastal areas. This kills the sea grasses and coral reefs that the seahorses need. Construction along beaches and coasts also causes pollution and kills coral reefs where the seahorses live. Because seahorses do not swim very well, it is hard for them to move to new areas once their home is destroyed.