

Peacock Clownfish

Kingdom: Animalia
 Phylum: Chordata
 Subphylum: Vertebrata
 Class: Actinopterygii
 Order: Perciformes
 Family: Pomacentridae
 Genus: *Amphiprion*
 Species: *ocellaris*

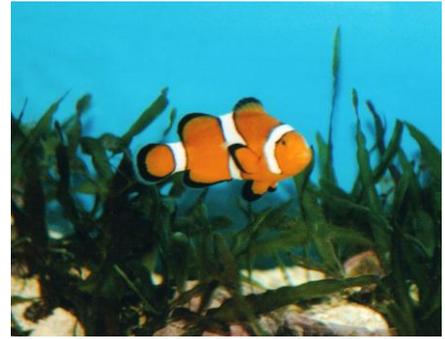


Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The peacock clownfish is a tropical marine fish found in the shallow water reefs and sheltered lagoons up to a depth of 15 feet. It ranges from northwestern Australia, southeastern Asia, and as far north as the Ryukyu Islands of Japan.
- **Exhibit Location:** USS Antiquities; grass tank and reef tank

Characteristics

- Length: 2-5 inches
- Peacock clownfish are normally bright orange with 3 white bars; the bars have thin, black margins.
- Females are larger than males.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 6-10 years; **In Captivity** 3-5 years

Behaviors

- Peacock clownfish have a special relationship with the sea anemone. It gives shelter and protection for the fish. The fish eat parasites and fan the water around the anemone. The clownfish attract larger fish and bring it to the anemone.
- All individuals first develop into males and then possibly into females. An adult male and female and several juveniles may live together in an anemone. If the female dies, then the largest male becomes the female, with the largest of the juveniles becoming the male.
- Females control males with aggressive dominance, thus controlling the creation of other females. The largest male in turn dominates the juveniles and prevents other males from spawning.
- Peacock clownfish are territorial to their anemone.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** rearranging the 'furniture' around the tank

Reproduction

- Peacock clownfish are monogamous. Specific mating habits of this species are not known.
- The male does nest preparation before spawning. Substrate is cleared on bare rock, but near its anemone for protection.
- Males attract females by extending fins, biting, and chasing. During spawning, males become increasingly aggressive.
- Spawning is year round in the tropics and warmer months in temperate areas. It occurs near the full moon and usually in the morning. At this time there are stronger water currents for larval distribution, a greater food supply, and increased visibility.
- The male will chase the female to the nest. The female will lay orange eggs over 1-2 hours before leaving the nest. The eggs are 0.12-0.16 inches in length and 100-1000 are laid, depending on the age of the female. The male then swims over the eggs and fertilizes them. The eggs are attached to the substrate with a fine thread.
- Incubation is 6-8 days, but can be longer if the water is cooler.

- Mainly the male does egg care, although the female sometimes helps. Care includes fanning the eggs and eating infertile or fungus infested eggs. Once the eggs hatch, they are independent of their parents.
- Hatching occurs in about 7 days and is in a short larval stage where it lives close to the surface. As they change from larvae to juvenile fish (usually within a day), the fish move from the surface to the bottom in search of a host anemone.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** zooplankton, copepods, algae, anemone parasites
- **At the Zoo:** brine and mysis shrimp, chopped fish and vitamin gelatin

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status** not listed; **CITES Appendix** not listed
- High demand for peacock clownfish in the aquarium trade has decreased their numbers in some locations.
- As threats to corals reefs increase, *Amphiprion ocellaris* may face problems in the future.
- Predators: damselfishes, anemonefishes, wrasses, brittle stars

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The Zoo's original group were acquired in 2003; all others were born and raised at the Zoo
- Peacock clownfish have a special relationship with sea anemones. Usually the anemone's tentacles would sting the fish as it passes by. However, this fish is somehow protected. Some think they have a special biochemical makeup in their mucous layer that gives them the protection.
- Clownfish can be killed by other species of anemones.
- Also known as: common clownfish, false clown anemonefish
- "Nemo" character from the movie *Finding Nemo* is a clownfish.

Children's Books

- *Clownfish (Underwater World)* by Deborah Coldiron Reading Level Ages 4-8
- *Clownfish (DK Baby Bathtime)* by DK Publishing Reading Level Ages Infant – Preschool
- *Curious Clownfish* by Eric Maddern Reading Level Ages 4-8

Sources:

- MarineBio.org. 2009. *Amphiprion ocellaris*, Clown anemonefish. Retrieved February 2, 2009, from MarineBio.org Web site: <http://marinebio.org/species.asp?id=29>.
- Newcomb, D. and W. Fink. 2004. "Amphiprion ocellaris" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed February 25, 2009 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Amphiprion_ocellaris.html.
- Parkinson, K. and M. McGrouther. (2003, July). Find a fish: False-clown anemonefish. Retrieved February 2, 2009 from Australian Museum Web site: <http://www.austmus.gov.au/fishes/fishfacts/fish/aocellaris.htm>