

OCEAN
LIFE UP
CLOSE

Sea Horses

by Christina Leaf



BELLWETHER MEDIA • MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Note to Librarians, Teachers, and Parents:

Blastoff! Readers are carefully developed by literacy experts and combine standards-based content with developmentally appropriate text.

Level 1 provides the most support through repetition of high-frequency words, light text, predictable sentence patterns, and strong visual support.

Level 2 offers early readers a bit more challenge through varied simple sentences, increased text load, and less repetition of high-frequency words.

Level 3 advances early-fluent readers toward fluency through increased text and concept load, less reliance on visuals, longer sentences, and more literary language.

Level 4 builds reading stamina by providing more text per page, increased use of punctuation, greater variation in sentence patterns, and increasingly challenging vocabulary.

Level 5 encourages children to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” by providing even more text, varied writing styles, and less familiar topics.

Whichever book is right for your reader, Blastoff! Readers are the perfect books to build confidence and encourage a love of reading that will last a lifetime!

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What Are Sea Horses?

A close-up photograph of a thorny sea horse, characterized by its brown, segmented body and prominent spines. It is clinging to a vibrant coral reef with various green and orange corals. The sea horse's head is turned to the right, showing its large, protruding snout and eyes.

thorny
sea horse

Sea horses are unusual fish. They have horselike heads! Their eyes can move in different directions at the same time.

These fish swim upright
using fins on their backs
and heads.



**long-snouted
sea horse**

Bony plates protect sea horses' long, curvy bodies. Males have soft pouches on their bellies.



Identify a Sea Horse



At the end of sea horse bodies are **flexible**, monkeylike tails. The tails have a boxy shape for a strong **grip**.

There are more than
45 types of sea horses.
Some are over 1 foot
(30 centimeters) long!

Sea Horse Sizes

Smallest

Satomi's pygmy
sea horse



actual size

0.5 inches
(1.3 centimeters)
long

Largest

pot-bellied
sea horse



average
human

14 inches
(36 centimeters)
long



**pot-bellied
sea horse**



**Satomi's pygmy
sea horse**

However, many are just a few inches long. Most sea horses weigh less than 1 pound (0.4 kilograms).

In the Shallow End

Shallow waters along coasts provide homes for sea horses. Most live around the **tropics**, but some are found in cooler waters.

spiny
sea horse



Species Spotlight

COMMON SEA HORSE

life span:
1 to 5 years

depth range:
0 to 26 feet
(0 to 8 meters)

common sea horse range = 



conservation status: vulnerable



They often settle in **coral reefs** or meadows of sea grass.

Hungry Sea Horses

These **carnivores** have no teeth. Long **snouts** let sea horses suck up **prey**. Favorite foods include brine shrimp and other tiny **crustaceans**.

Sea horses do not have stomachs to **digest** food. They must eat all the time.



Catch of the Day



brine
shrimp



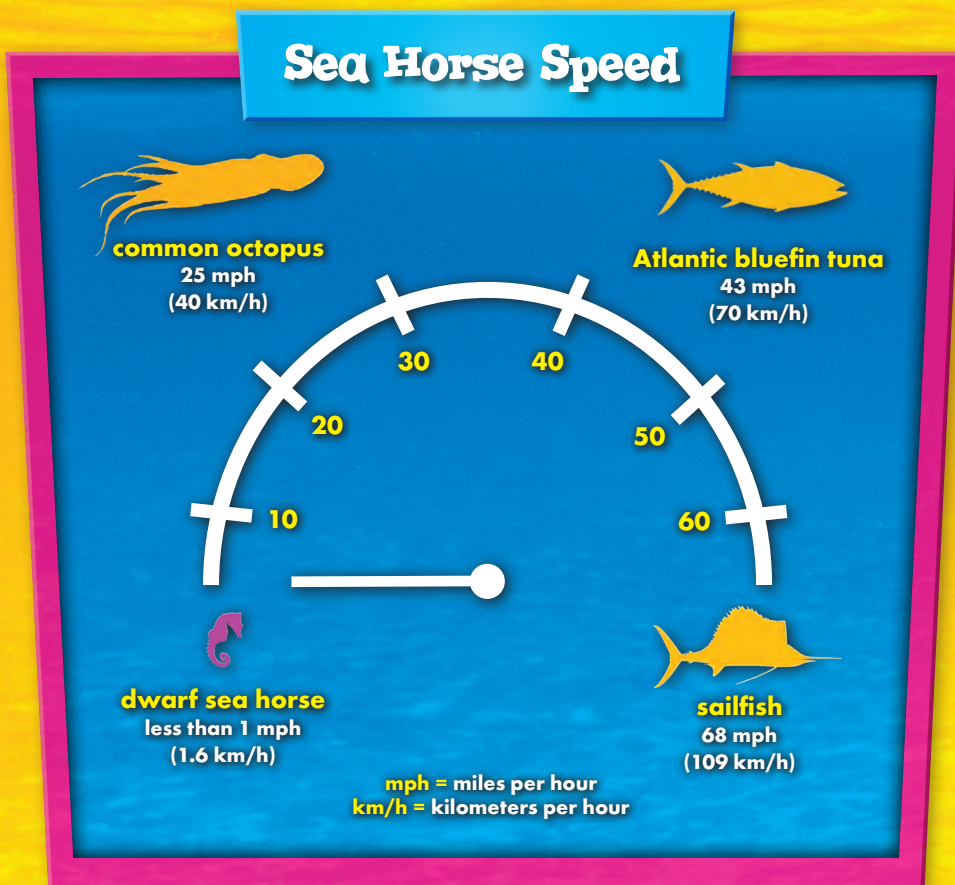
Atlantic
ditch shrimp



water
fleas



Sea horses are slow swimmers. They usually try to stay in one place. Their tails hang on to **coral** or sea grass.





pygmy
sea horse

To hide, sea horses have **camouflage**. Some can even change colors!

Mates and Fry


Many sea horses stay with the same mate for life. They find each other through fancy **courtship displays**.



lined
sea horses



Males and females often change colors and dance to show interest. Then the two twist their tails together.

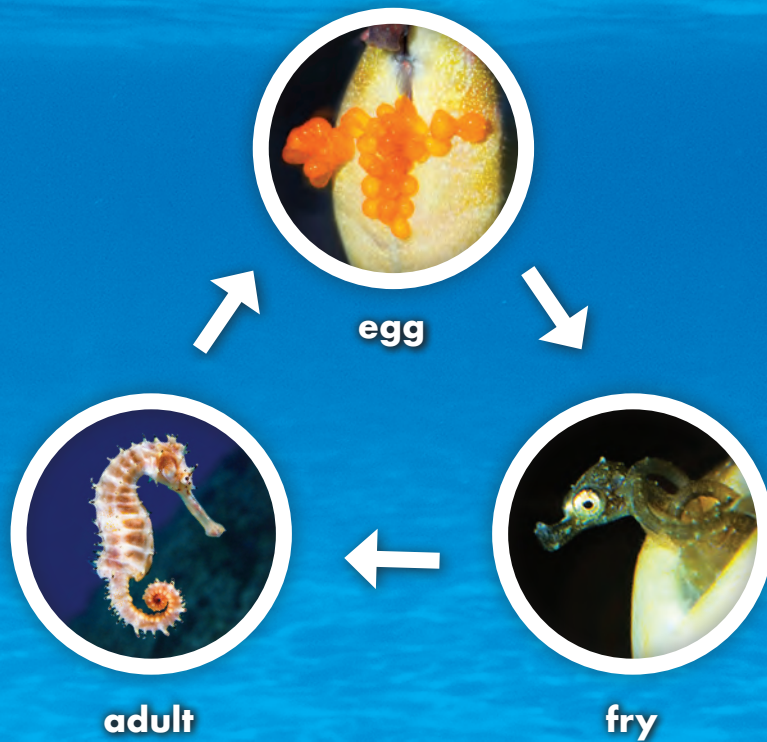


short-headed
sea horse

Courtship displays can last for hours or even days! At the end, the female puts her eggs in the male's pouch.

After a few weeks,
the male gives birth to
hundreds of babies.

Life Cycle of a Sea Horse





Baby sea horses, called **fry**, look like tiny adults. Most fry hold on to grass and coral to stay in place.

Some catch a ride on floating plants to find a new home!



Glossary

camouflage—a way of using color to blend in with surroundings

carnivores—animals that only eat meat

coral—the living ocean animals that build coral reefs

coral reefs—structures made of coral that usually grow in shallow seawater

courtship displays—behaviors that animals perform when choosing mates

crustaceans—animals that have several pairs of legs and hard outer shells; crabs and shrimp are types of crustaceans.

digest—to break down food so it can be used for the body

flexible—able to bend

fry—baby sea horses

grip—a tight hold

prey—animals that are hunted by other animals for food

snouts—the long noses and mouths of some animals

tropics—a hot region near the equator

To Learn More

AT THE LIBRARY

Curtis, Jennifer Keats. *Seahorses*. New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt, 2012.

MacQuitty, Dr. Miranda. *Eyewitness Ocean*. New York, N.Y.: DK Publishing, 2014.

Owen, Ruth. *Seahorse Fry*. New York, N.Y.: Bearport Pub., 2013.

ON THE WEB

Learning more about sea horses is as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Go to www.factsurfer.com.
2. Enter "sea horses" into the search box.
3. Click the "Surf" button and you will see a list of related web sites.

With factsurfer.com, finding more information is just a click away.



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