

Anemonefish



Anemonefish are also called Clownfish and have been made famous by the *Walt Disney* movie *Finding Nemo*.

Anemonefish have large stripes which are often white and a bright colour. Each type of Anemonefish has its own colours and striped pattern. There are thirty different types of this fish.

They only live in the warmer waters and are commonly seen on tropical reefs. They are found in the shallow seas of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Each type of Anemonefish has its own favourite types of anemones it likes to live in.

Anemones are very simple animals. They have a body, mouth, stomach and many tentacles. They don't have brains, eyes, hearts or much else. Their tentacles are special. In the skin of the tentacles are stingers with hooks. When animals touch the tentacles the stingers are fired and hook into the animals. The stingers will hurt and sometimes kill small animals. anemonefish have a special covering of chemicals. The chemicals stop the stingers from firing.

Anemonefish can hide in the tentacles and get protection from other animals. They help the anemones by keeping them clean. The anemone and the anemonefish help each other. Anemonefish eat tiny floating animals and tiny floating plants called algae as well as the waste of the anemones.

Pollution in the sea and big ocean storms can destroy coral reefs and the places where anemones and anemonefish live. In many places in the world anemonefish are caught and sold to aquarium shops. These fish are the most sought after marine fish kept in aquariums.

Additional teacher notes

- Anemones have a mouth and stomach that is like a chamber. There is no exit to the stomach other than the mouth. So the waste exits through the mouth. Anemones are among the simplest of all animals.
- Once an anemone starts to develop, it must find a place to glue itself down. It is able to very slowly move around, but usually remains in the same position.
- Anemonefish live in groups. When breeding, only the largest male and female Anemonefish breed. When one of the breeding pair dies, the next largest fish will take its place.
- As with the film *Finding Nemo*, taking these fish for the aquarium trade is a very serious conservation issue. Only a small proportion of the Anemonefish sold are bred in captivity. Climate change and the seas becoming more acidic will threaten all coral reefs.
- Another threat to anemonefish is the changing nature of ocean water. It is becoming more acidic as it absorbs more and more carbon dioxide from the air. Once the ocean becomes a weak acid, corals can no longer absorb calcium from the seawater to make its skeleton. The coral reefs will die and all the animals that rely on the reefs will also die. We can see this destruction in the fossil record when it occurred millions of years ago.