

Prawn Species Information

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Shrimp and prawns tend to get mixed up in aquatic literature. Even the popular names of these animals cause confusion. Most prawns have well-developed claws that are used primarily to seek out and tear food into bite-sized chunks so that it can be eaten.

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Enoplometopus daumi Many of these animals are available to marine hobbyists, but there are others in this group, such as the deep-sea prawns belonging to the family Pandalidae and the freshwater shrimp of the family Atyidae, that are totally unsuitable. Barbershop shrimp from the genus Stenopus are of great interest, and some species are circumtropical in their distribution. Squat lobsters from the family Nephropidae are also available, and those of the genus Enoplometopus are very decorative.

Stenopus hispidus

Family. Stenopodidea

Natural habitat. This circumtropical species is found around prominent coral heads and under reef overhangs where the water is not too turbulent.

Description. Known commonly as the barbershop shrimp because of its distinct coloration, this red-and-white-banded coral shrimp performs an important service as a cleaner in most tropical seas. It grows to about 4 inches and is easily identified by its markings. In the wild the species is common in crevices and caves where it establishes cleaning stations for a variety of marine fishes.

Aquarium suitability. This species is suitable for most reef and marine tanks. Once it has settled in an aquarium, it eagerly accepts most foods that are offered within a relatively short span of time. This species should be kept singly or in pairs. A third specimen added later will usually be killed within a few days by those that are already established in the tank.

Enoplometopus daumi

Family. Nephropidae

Natural habitat. This species is found the Indo-Australian archipelago in caves and crevices and among reef rubble.

Description. The color of the carapace and claws can vary from yellow to bright red. There are numerous cirri on the claws and body, and the back is adorned with small white spots. This reef lobster reaches a total length of about 4½ inches.

Aquarium suitability. This species is a scavenger that feeds on almost anything. It is ideal for a large and robust reef tank, where it also forms a symbiotic relationship with the pink-tailed triggerfish (*Melichthys vidua*). These are strange bedfellows indeed!

Enoplometopus debelius

Family. Nephropidae

Natural habitat. Found in the Indo-West Pacific from Indonesia to Hawaii in caves and crevices or under overhangs.

Description. The background body color of this species is white, fading to mauve toward the telson. The two large claws are also mauve, and the entire carapace, thoracic and abdominal segments are suffused with bright reddish mauve spots. This reef lobster is one of the most attractive of all the crustaceans. At night it becomes an active scavenger. It grows to 4 inches.

Aquarium suitability. This is an ideal but shy species that will live for many years in a well-established reef aquarium. It is a good species for getting rid of any uneaten food particles in the tank. Because of its scavenging nature, this species quickly learns to accept all foods that are offered to it.

Callinassa californiensis

Family. Callinassidae

Natural habitat. This species is found in the eastern Pacific. It tunnels in the substrate and forms burrows that may be up to 6½ feet deep.

Description. The California ghost shrimp often lives in association with the innkeeper worm (*Urechis caupo*). It feeds on detritus that falls into its tunnel system. By beating the swimmerets on its tail, it creates water currents through these tunnels.

Aquarium suitability. A specially constructed aquarium is required for this species. This can be done if the hobbyist is clever enough. Porous PVC tubing can be used to provide the tunnel system, which is then cemented to the front glass.

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