

Rare Clownfish Bred in U.S.

Kevin Kohen and the Drs. Foster and Smith team have bred the rare McCulloch's clownfish (Amphiprion mccullochi).

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Aquarium hobbyists may be seeing a lot more of the McCulloch's clownfish in the coming years. Along with Kevin Kohen, director of LiveAquaria.com, the staff at Rhinelander, Wisconsin's Drs. Foster and Smith Marine Life Facility successfully spawned a pair of McCulloch's clownfish for the first time inside the United States.

The McCulloch's clownfish is one of the rarest clownfish species in the aquarium trade, due to its limited range within a protected marine sanctuary near a small island off the east coast of Australia. Lord Howe Island in the Pacific Ocean was designated a World Heritage Site in 1982, and the waters in and around this small island are protected as part of the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. For this reason, the McCulloch's clownfish has not been available before in the aquarium trade.

In early 2006, an Australian enthusiast was fortunate enough to legally collect *Amphiprion mccullochi*. After overcoming some major obstacles, five pairs of this fish were successfully transported back to New South Wales, Australia. Through trial and error, the first documented successful spawning and rearing of *Amphiprion mccullochi* in a captive environment took place in early 2007.

In October of 2008, after months of work and negotiations, Drs. Foster and Smith put a deposit down to be the recipients of several remaining pairs of these captive-raised *Amphiprion mccullochi* with the goal of achieving successful spawning in captivity for the first time outside of Australia. The task of even bonding a pair for spawning proved nearly impossible, complicated by the species' aggressive nature and ability to morph between sexes, depending on established social dominance hierarchies. After more than 20 arduous attempts to bond a pair, two finally exhibited spawning behavior, which was caught on tape.

Drs. Foster and Smith are in the process of raising the larvae, and the breeding pair is very productive, consistently spawning every 12 to 14 days. They plan on selling the offspring in early in 2010 in the Diver's Den section of the LiveAquaria.com website. To witness this rare moment documented for the first time, visit LiveAquaria.com for exclusive footage.