

Mandarinfish (*Synchiropus splendidus*)

Information on the Mandarinfish (*Synchiropus splendidus*).

The spotted mandarinfish (*Synchiropus picturatus*) is another one of the popular Mandarin dragonets kept by aquarists. Photo by Clay Jackson and courtesy of NeptunesReef.com

Family: Callionymidae (Dragonets)
Size: 3 inches
Temperature: 74 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit
Origin: Pacific Ocean

Mandarinfish look like something out of a hallucination, with their incredible psychedelic design and the way they hop around the tank in search of food. These fish have a reputation for being difficult, if not impossible, to get to feed, but in recent years this is really no longer the case. We have learned enough about how to keep and feed them, and the technology of the hobby has progressed to where, as long as you do not try and introduce Mandarinfish into newly established tanks, or bare tanks, they actually have a fairly good survival rate.

One look at the Mandarinfish tells you how they make their living; their mouths are very tiny, and they are constantly hopping about and in among the rocks and other décor looking for food.

The primary Mandarinfish food are copepods. As a result, Mandarins require a) an established tank with lots of live rock, and b) that they be the only fish that forages in those places for copepods. Setting up a refugium is another way to provide food for Mandarins. Also, you can now purchase live copepods at your local fish store, so if you do not have enough in your tank, you can add them on a regularly basis.

After they have become established, Mandarinfish will eventually pick at foods offered to the rest of the fish in the tank, but they must be provided with live rock and a mature tank, with little or no competition for food from other fishes.