**Hippocampus trimaculatus**  
*Leach 1814*

**Common names**
Three-spot seahorse; *takakura-tatsu* (Japanese; Japan); low-crowned seahorse and flat-faced seahorse (Australia)

**Synonyms**
*H. mannulus* Cantor 1850; *H. kampylotrachelos* Bleeker 1854d; *H. manadensis* Bleeker 1856; *H. planifrons* Peters 1877; *H. dahli* Ogilby 1908; *H. takakurae* Tanaka 1916

**Description**
*Maximum recorded adult height:* 17 cm

- **Trunk rings:** 11
- **Tail rings:** 40–41 (38–43)
- **HL/SnL:** 2.2 (1.9–2.4)
- **Rings supporting dorsal fin:** 2 trunk rings and 1 tail ring
- **Dorsal fin rays:** 20 (18–22)
- **Pectoral fin rays:** 17–18 (16–19)
- **Coronet:** Low, in line with arch of neck, visible as five tiny points
- **Spines:** Low and small, to slightly raised
- **Other characteristics:** Sharp, hook-like cheek, eye spines (appear flat); narrow head; no nose spine
**Colour/pattern:** Golden orange, sandy coloured or totally black; may have large dark spots on the dorso-lateral surface of the first, fourth and seventh trunk rings (less visible in dark specimens, and more common in males than females); some specimens zebra-striped in brown and white

**Confirmed distribution**
Australia; Cambodia; China (Hong Kong SAR and Province of Taiwan); France (Tahiti); India; Indonesia; Japan; Malaysia; Myanmar; Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Viet Nam

**Suspected distribution**
Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; China; Papua New Guinea; Sri Lanka

**Habitat**
Typically found at >10 m depth\(^6\); maximum reported depth 100 m\(^{108}\); octocorals, macro algae, not hard corals\(^8\); gravel, sandy bottoms around shallow reefs\(^6\); muddy bottoms in deeper waters\(^9\)

**Life history**
Breeding season year round, peaking March to May and in October\(^103\); egg diameter averages 1 mm\(^109\); gestation duration averages 16 days\(^15\); length at birth averages 6 mm\(^109\); maximum reported brood size 1783\(^95\)

**Trade**
Dried for traditional medicine and curios

**Conservation status**
The entire genus *Hippocampus* is listed in Appendix II of CITES, effective May 2004\(^1\). *H. trimaculatus* is listed as Vulnerable by IUCN\(^13\). Australian populations were moved under the Australian Wildlife Protection Act in 1998 and placed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act in 2001; Indian populations were placed under Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) in 2001 which bans any collection or trade; listed as Vulnerable in the Viet Nam National Red Data book

**Similar species**
- *H. fisheri*, a smaller species found in Hawaii, has double cheek and eye spines, a prominent nose spine, and a hooked spine in front of the coronet; some body spines are greatly enlarged; and it has fewer tail rings and fin rays
- *H. zebra* has no cheek spine, fewer tail rings, fewer dorsal fin rays, and a higher coronet

**Other notes**
- Some specimens from northwest Australia have shorter snouts (HL/SnL ratio of 2.3–2.7), deeper heads and bodies, usually 23 dorsal fin rays, small cheek and eye spines (not hook-like), and characteristic split spots on the first and fourth trunk rings. These may represent a separate species