



Syngnathids in Public Aquaria – Husbandry Perspectives and Conservation Opportunities

Paula Carlson

Presenting Author: Paula Carlson

The Dallas World Aquarium, Texas, USA

For generations, Seahorses, Seadragons, Pipefish and their relatives have fascinated and inspired visitors to public aquaria and zoos. Millions of people visit these facilities each year. Their mythical appearance, and unusual reproductive behaviors make them some of the most popular species in aquarium collections. Once difficult to breed and rear in an aquarium, advances in their husbandry are helping to build sustainable, managed populations. Aquarium scientists and husbandry specialists are in a unique position to be able to study these fish in a controlled environment and this opportunity has contributed to increased knowledge about their biology, natural history, and breeding behaviors. Increased human impacts that have contributed to decreasing populations of Syngnathids in their natural environment, have made it critically important for scientists to work together to find solutions that will ensure the survival of these amazing animals. Public aquaria can be important partners in this effort with field researchers, aquaculture biologists and conservation agencies through collaboration and information sharing. As ambassadors for their fragile coastal ecosystems, Syngnathids themselves can play an equally important role in helping to engage the public in their conservation. These fantastical fishes tell a compelling story. One of the most important roles of public aquaria is to continue to share that story and inspire future generations to study them and conserve them.

Keywords: Ex situ and aquaculture, Conservation and management, Behavioural ecology, Public aquaria, husbandry

