



Male Mate Choice in *Hippocampus zosterae*

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Hippocampus zosterae is one of many species in the order *Syngnathiformes* considered monogamous due to the formation of male and female pair bonds. The mechanisms for mate selection are not well understood, but this study tests to see if male mate choice is dictated by size. Each male was partitioned from two females by a clear porous divider and the females were separated from each other by an opaque divider. The male and female groupings were based on weight, having the smaller female's weight and the larger female's weight equidistant from the male's weight. The activity of the seahorses for the first three hours after dawn were recorded for eight consecutive days to observe courtship behavior. By testing the male location over the first two days, we analyzed their initial female choice independently from the female responses to the male. Over the first two days, males significantly picked the large female over the small female without the influence of time. The data indicates male mate choice is influenced by size, but continuing studies are needed to indicate if other factors, such as female coloration, influence pair bonding.