



## **Lined Seahorse (*Hippocampus erectus*) Habitat Preferences In A Bahamian Saltwater Lake**

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Out of forty-one members of the *Hippocampus* genus in the family *Syngnathidae*, all are listed as under threat globally by the IUCN. Sweetings Pond, an anchialine lake located on Eleuthera in the Bahamas is of great interest to researchers due to a local, unusually abundant population of *Hippocampus erectus* found within the lake. An analysis of data collected from the lake was used to determine if populations of *H. erectus* exhibited preference of holdfast or depth. Specimens were found from a depth of 0.5-5 meters, with most found between 0.5-2.3 meters. Preliminary results demonstrate that 70% of seahorses were found on *Laurencia* sp. (n=594). This preference was independent of age class or sex, but did vary among the north and south sites. *Laurencia* composed 30% of benthic cover on average during the dry season, of with there being 8% cover in the wet season. However, it was proportionally abundant in three of the five sites during the dry season, with decreased cover during the wet season. Overall, the unique community of Sweetings Pond, combined with its isolation, has created a beautifully unique *Hippocampus* population, the likes of which has not been seen anywhere else in the world.