

Checklist

Before purchase make sure that:

- 1 You have the appropriate equipment and position for the aquarium.
- 2 You have researched all the species you are interested in and your final choices are all compatible.
- 3 You are familiar with how to transport and release your fish.
- 4 You are aware of the daily, weekly and monthly maintenance your aquarium will require.
- 5 You are prepared to look after your fish properly for the duration of their life.

Equipment

- 1 Glass or plastic aquarium
- 2 Gravel cleaner
- 3 Water testing kit
- 4 Marine salt
- 5 Marine substrate & live rock
- 6 Filter & protein skimmer
- 7 Food
- 8 Heater, thermometer & hydrometer
- 9 Reverse osmosis/de-ionised water or tap water conditioner

Before purchase make sure:

- 1 Water parameters are as advised in this leaflet.
- 2 The aquarium is well-established and large enough
- 3 The fish are compatible with existing set-up



Never release your aquarium animals or plants into the wild

Never release an animal or plant bought for a home aquarium into the wild. It is illegal and for most fish species this will lead to an untimely and possibly lingering death because they are not native to this country. Any animals or plants that do survive might be harmful to the environment.

Important things to remember

Always buy...

test kits and regularly check the water for ammonia, nitrite, nitrate and pH. This will allow you to make sure the water in your aquarium is not causing welfare problems for your fish.

Establish a routine...

for testing the water in your aquarium. Record your results to enable you to highlight fluctuations quickly. Also check the temperature of the water.

Maintain...

the water in the aquarium within the accepted parameters highlighted in this leaflet. You may need to do regular water changes to achieve this.

Always wash your hands...

making sure to rinse off all soap residues, before putting them into your aquarium. Wash your hands again afterwards and certainly before eating, drinking or smoking.

Never siphon by mouth...

A fish tank can harbour bacteria which can be harmful if swallowed. Buy a specially designed aquarium gravel cleaner which can be started without the need to place the siphon in your mouth.



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If in doubt contact your OATA retail member for further information



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How to care for...



Clownfish, Damselfish, Chromis & Basslets



Introduction

This group are small reef fish. The damsels, chromis and clownfish belong to the family Pomacentridae. The basslets belong to the family Grammatidae.

The members of Pomacentridae have a worldwide distribution in tropical coastal areas, although the greatest concentration can be found in Australian waters. The Grammatidae has just 12 species and the most common aquarium species is the Royal Gramma, which is found in the waters of Bahamas, Venezuela and Lesser Antilles.

Water requirements

This group of fish are often thought of as the hardiest marine species, particularly the damsels. The water parameters below are a guide only, these fish may acclimatise to different water:

Temperature: 23 to 28°C

pH: 8.1 to 8.4

Ammonia: 0mg/l (0.01mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

Nitrite: 0mg/l (0.125mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

S.G: 1.020 to 1.025

Biology

All of these species remain relatively small making them good additions to reef tanks, the maximum body size will rarely exceed 10cm.

Clownfish are protandrous hermaphrodites, this means all the young start as males. When a breeding pair is formed, the dominant one will change sex into a female.

Clownfish were given their name due to the behavioural traits they show towards anemones. These fish use the anemone as a home and as a protection against predation. These little fish are immune to the nematocysts (stinging cells) which the anemone uses to warn off predators and capture prey.

However not all anemone fish require an anemone to thrive in captivity, ask your OATA retailer for advice. Anemones may be difficult to keep and are not recommended for beginners.

Aquarium requirements

In the past, these fish have been used to cycle a new marine tank due to their hardiness. If they are used for this, then great care must be taken to monitor and manage the water quality.

Due to their small size, these fish can be successfully kept in 'nano' aquaria if water quality is closely monitored. Larger tanks of 100 litres or more are ideal and may be easier to maintain. A larger tank will also allow keeping fish in larger groups.

In addition to the filter, heater, hood, lighting and thermometer, a protein skimmer is also highly recommended. A hydrometer or refractometer should be used to determine the salinity of the water. A UV steriliser can also be added to the system. This may help to reduce disease causing organisms within the aquarium.

The bottom of the tank is best covered with marine sand or gravel. The addition of live rock is also beneficial and will aid biological filtration.

Maintenance

At least every two weeks, a partial water change of 25 to 30% is strongly recommended (a siphon device is also useful to remove waste from the gravel). This help to reduce the build-up of potentially harmful nitrates and other pollutants. Replacement water should be dechlorinated using strong aeration or a tap water conditioner (if not using reverse osmosis water). Ideally, replacement water should be heated and enough salt should be added to achieve the correct salinity.

Filters should be checked for clogging and blockages. If the filter needs cleaning, then do not wash it using tap water; any chlorine present may kill the beneficial bacteria that has established within the media. Instead, it can be rinsed in tank water which is removed during a partial water change. This should reduce the number of bacteria lost.

Good husbandry is essential as these fish can be stressed by even the smallest amounts of ammonia and nitrite. Test the water weekly to monitor ammonia, nitrite and nitrate, especially after initial set-up and after adding new fish. Do not forget to check the salinity because this may increase due to evaporation of water.

If live rock and invertebrates are present in the aquarium, never use copper based medications. Copper is highly toxic to invertebrate species, including those found within live rock.

Feeding

In the wild these fish are often thought of as scavengers, feeding on the free floating plankton and detritus which floats past in the currents. This makes them ideal aquarium starter fish because they readily accept manufactured foods within a short time and some species are captive-bred.

A balanced diet of copepods, mysid shrimp, algae and marine flake should provide these fish with all their dietary requirements. These fish should be fed what they can eat within a few minutes 2 to 3 times a day. Remove any uneaten food to reduce waste build-up.

Potential problems

A water quality problem will affect fish behaviour and can be shown by clamped fins, reduced feeding, erratic swimming and gasping at the surface. Immediately test the water if any of these symptoms are shown. If in doubt ask your OATA retailer for advice.

Compatibility

Chromis, clownfish and basslets can be added to most reef aquariums safely. However avoid large aggressive tank mates, which may be able to eat them.

The most common basslet, the Royal Gramma will do well in small reef tanks although do not keep two in the same tank as they can become aggressive towards each other.

When purchasing damsels be aware of the aggression certain species can show, particularly the three and four striped varieties. As juveniles they can be mild in temperament but this changes with maturity. More appropriate species include the Yellow-Tail damsel and chromis.

The Pink Skunk clownfish is one example of a clownfish which may suffer without an anemone.

Breeding

Currently, clownfish are one of the success stories for captive breeding in the marine industry. It is unlikely there would be successful breeding in a community marine tank as the microscopic food the fry require would be a limited.

