

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Neon Goby

Gobiosoma oceanops

Range/Habitat

- The neon goby is found throughout the western central Atlantic including southern Florida, the Flower Garden coral reefs 100 miles (161 km) off the Texas/Louisiana coast, the northern Yucatan peninsula and Belize. It has not been reported in Bahamas or oceanic islands of the Caribbean.
- The species is associated with reefs, usually above or among corals in depths from 3 to 168 feet (1 - 45 m).
- The neon goby dwells in living corals and on rock substrates and is occasionally found on the outer surfaces of large sponges.
- It has been observed singly or in groups of up to 30 individuals on a single coral.

Physical Characteristics

- Although the coloration may vary by the region from which it originated, the neon goby has a dark upper body and pale undersides. It has an electric blue lateral stripe running from the front of each eye to the base of the tail.
- Individuals typically measure between 1 to 1½ inches (2.5 - 3.8 cm) in length.
- Its mouth is located near the tip of its pointed snout.
- The pelvic fins are joined to form a cuplike suction disk.

Diet/Feeding

- The neon goby is a “cleaner fish” that eats parasites and dead tissue off of other fish.
- Its larvae feed on small plankton.

Conservation Status

- The neon goby is not included on the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- The neon goby will usually congregate at cleaning stations where it perches waiting for fish requiring its services. When a fish presents itself for cleaning, the goby will swim alongside the fish and nip off any parasites from its skin.
- It is the only cleaning goby in Florida waters.
- The reproductive behavior of this species is unique. The male cleans the underside of a rock, coral or shell to prepare a nest for the eggs. He will swim in front of a female and entice her into the shell or crevice. Spawning occurs with the two quivering side by side, with the female depositing about 300 to 500 eggs on the nest. Individuals can spawn numerous times in a month. The pair will remain together to care for the eggs. The male will guard the nest and circulate oxygen-rich water over them by using his pectoral and caudal fins. The eggs hatch in seven to ten days. Larvae are 0.16 inch (4 mm) in length. The parents do not take care of the fry.
- The neon goby will rest on coral and flee into crevices when threatened.

Sources

www.fishbase.org

Peterson Field Guides, Atlantic Coast Fishes. Robins, C. R. and Ray, G. C., pg. 251

Reef Fish Identification. Human, P. and Deloach, N., pg. 263

Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia. Hutchins, M., pg. 384

Reef Fish Behavior. Human, P. and Deloach, N., pg. 100