

# GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

## Fish-eating Anemone

*Urticina piscivora*

### Range/Habitat

- The fish-eating anemone is found in the cold coastal waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean from Alaska to Southern California.
- This anemone typically occurs on the sides of rocks from the low intertidal zone to about the 160-foot (48.7m) depth.

### Physical Characteristics

- The fish-eating anemone can grow to 8 inches (20 cm) tall (20) and 10 inches (25.6 cm) in diameter.
- It has a smooth red column without spots with short, slender, white tentacles which can be tipped with red or pink.

### Diet/Feeding

- This anemone feeds on small fishes as well as a variety of invertebrates that it captures with its stinging tentacles.

### Conservation Status

- The fish-eating anemone is not included on the IUCN Red List.
- Rocky reefs are important habitats for many kinds of fish and invertebrates, including the fish-eating anemone, but "rockhopper" trawls, used in commercial fishing can leave reefs a tumbled wasteland, not to recover for decades.

### Additional Information

- The fish-eating anemone was previously known as *Tealia piscivora*.
- While more delicate species rake in bits of food, the fish-eating anemone has sturdy tentacles that can capture shrimp and small fishes. Like other anemones, the fish-eating anemone grows larger when food is plentiful and shrinks in size when food is scarce.
- A small fish called the "painted greenling" sometimes will lie among the tentacles of a fish-eating anemone to seek protection, much like a clownfish does in certain tropical anemones.
- Sea anemones are primitive animals. Several thousand species live in the sea at various depths and temperatures. They are most abundant in tropical coastal waters. They may be solidly colored, striped or patterned.
- The base of an anemone ranges in size from one-half inch to 36 inches depending on species. Most attach to rocky surfaces, although there are several species of burrowing anemones.
- Anemones do not permanently attach to the substrate. They can move if food is lacking or a predator threatens them. Limited movement is achieved by slowly gliding along on the pedal disc the attaches the animal to the substrate. Some can even "swim" by bending their bodies or lashing their tentacles. A few do "handstands" and travel on their tentacles.
- Prey is captured by stinging cells called "nematocysts." Located all along each tentacle, the cigar-shaped nematocyst contains a barbed, coiled thread. The thread

carries a venom. When stimulated or touched by possible prey, the thread shoots out and the venom is injected into the prey organism paralyzing or killing it outright. The prey is held to the tentacles by the nematocyst threads. The tentacles then turn inward passing the food into a sack-like digestive cavity through the mouth located in the center of the ring of tentacles. Digestive enzymes secreted from the cavity lining breaks down the food into a thick broth which circulates through the anemone. Anything that cannot be digested is ejected back out through the mouth.

- Boiled and spiced anemones are eaten throughout the Mediterranean and in some parts of the Indo-Pacific. Otherwise anemones have no enemies aside from sea slugs and a few fishes. But they do have some curious “friends.” Several species of hermit crab carry an anemone about on their shells. When the hermit crab moves to a larger shell, it carefully places the anemone on the new shell. The anemone protects and camouflages the hermit crab. In return, the anemone is able to grab bits of food when the hermit crab is feeding.
- Anemones reproduce in a variety of ways according to species. Some do so asexually by splitting either horizontally or vertically. Others grow from pieces of pedal disc left behind when the animal moves. Some reproduce sexually from eggs and sperm produced in separate female and male individuals.

#### **Sources**

<http://www.aquariumofthebay.com>

<http://www.reef.org/webres/gallery/invert/page02.htm>

[http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living\\_species/](http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living_species/)

<http://www.mysticaquarium.org/animals/facts/animalfacts.asp>

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