

MARINE LIFE

SHRIMPS



THE TINY HOST SPECIALISTS OF THE REEF

Shrimps are among the most rewarding macro subjects for divers and photographers. Many species live on specific host animals such as sea cucumbers, sea stars, anemones, fire urchins and whip corals. Their colours, fine detail and fascinating relationships make them ideal subjects for careful, respectful macro diving.

QUICK FACTS

	SCIENTIFIC GROUP	Decapod crustaceans
	SIZE	Usually 1–6 cm, depending on species
	HABITAT	Reefs, rubble, anemones, sea cucumbers, urchins and whip corals
	DEPTH RANGE	Shallow reef to recreational diving depths
	DIET	Varies by species; plankton, detritus, parasites or small prey
	SPECIAL FEATURE	Many species are host specialists or cleaners

ANATOMY & ADAPTATIONS

ANTENNAE

Long, highly sensitive feelers used to detect food, mates and surroundings.

COMPOUND EYES

Provide wide vision and detect movement and light changes.

ROSTRUM

Pointed extension on the head used for sensing and defence.

SWIMMERETS

Small appendages beneath the abdomen used for swimming.

TAIL FAN

Fan-shaped tail (uropods + telson) provides powerful backward thrust.

WALKING LEGS

Five pairs of legs with claws used for walking, grasping and holding onto hosts.



HABITAT



Macro shrimps are often found by searching their host animals rather than the shrimp itself. Anemones, fire urchins, sea cucumbers, reef crevices and whip corals are all excellent places to look.

COMMON LOCATIONS:

Anemones | Fire urchins | Sea cucumbers | Whip corals | Reef crevices

BEHAVIOUR & DIET



HOST SPECIALISTS

Many species live on or near a specific host animal.



CLEANERS

Some shrimps remove parasites and dead tissue from fish.



DEFENCE

They rely on camouflage or transparency and use rapid backward escape when threatened.



DID YOU KNOW?

Long antennae and body posture often help photographers identify species.

EMPEROR SHRIMP



- Often found on sea cucumbers, sea stars and nudibranchs.
- Small hitchhiker with orange, white and purple tones
- One of the most recognisable macro shrimps
- Excellent example of a host relationship

HARLEQUIN SHRIMP



- Famous for bold blotched patterns and paddle-like claws
- Closely linked with sea stars
- A favourite subject for macro photographers
- Best approached carefully and never disturbed

FUN FACTS



Some shrimps are almost transparent.



Cleaner shrimps run natural reef cleaning stations.



Many macro shrimps are easier to find by learning their host animals.



Good buoyancy matters more than getting closer.



CONSERVATION

Macro shrimps depend on healthy reef habitats and delicate host animals. Responsible diving, careful buoyancy and non-invasive photography help protect both the shrimp and the creatures they live on.



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