

Special Feature

Marine animals, such as fish, crabs and starfish produce many thousands of eggs, just to make sure that at least some of their offspring survive in the harsh conditions of the sea.

In March 2011 a female ornate rock lobster (Latin name *Panulirus ornatus*) produced thousands of eggs that were all hatched out at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) headquarters in Townsville. Because ornate rock lobsters are very difficult to breed in captivity, this was a great breakthrough. It paves the way not only for a farmed lobster industry in Australia, which will ease fishing pressure on the wild stock, but will also allow scientists to restock lobsters back into the wild.

Lobster restocking is already being investigated in Ireland, using the native species (*Homarus vulgaris*) at the Shellfish Research Laboratory of NUI Galway. Because our domestic lobsters tend to eat each other, each tiny lobster has to be raised separately until they are large enough to release into the wild. At this point they are delivered to the bottom by divers to protect them from being eaten by carnivorous fish on the way down.

Happy Mother's Day Mrs. Lobster



"The Love Life of Sea Horses"

Sea horses mate for life and perform a complicated courtship "dance" as part of their mating ritual. The dance takes place between a pair of sea horses for about an hour each day for about a week until, on the last day, a much longer dance of up to eight hours takes place. At the end of this dance the female sea horse places her eggs in a special pouch that the male has on his belly and he hatches them out. Tests have



shown that if the male is taken away from the female after a day or so at the beginning of the week, she will happily accept another male to give her eggs to. But if that first male is brought back again and reintroduced to her later, she will not accept him. It is almost as if he "jilted her" and she is angry at having been "stood up" on a date.

Sea horses are under threat in Asia because their dried bodies are used in Chinese medicine and for the souvenir trade. This is why a number of projects all over the world are experimenting with ways of breeding them in captivity to provide live animals that might be restocked back into the wild or used as a substitute for wild sea horses in the future. Learn more about these fascinating creatures on www.seahorseaquariums.com

**Captain
Cockle's Log**

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