

1999

# Behold a pale seahorse

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# MARINE SCIENCE ILLUSTRATED

by a.p. surtida &  
e.t. ledesma

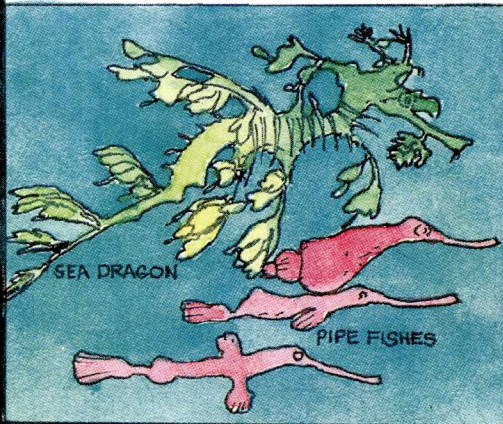
## Behold a pale Seahorse



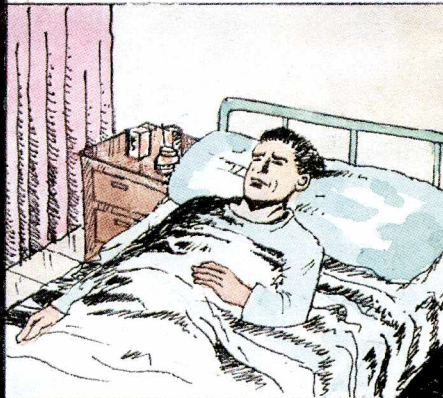
SEAHORSES REPRESENT AN UNEXPLORED GENRE OF FISHERIES: ONE INTENDED FOR MEDICINE RATHER THAN FOOD. THE BIGGEST THREAT TO THEIR EXISTENCE IS TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM) AND ITS ASIAN EQUIVALENTS: "HANYAK" IN KOREA; "KAMPO" IN JAPAN; "JAMMU" IN INDONESIA; AND FOLK HEALING IN THE PHILIPPINES...



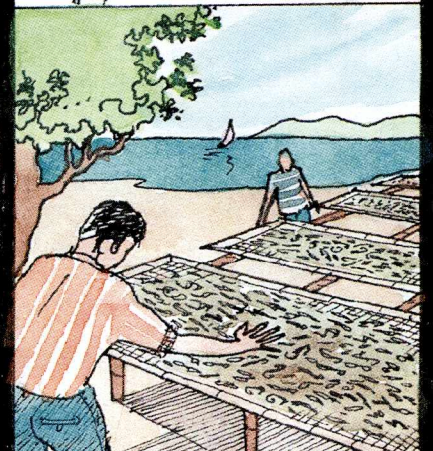
TOGETHER WITH OTHER SYNGNATHIDS SUCH AS SEA DRAGONS AND PIPE FISHES, SEAHORSES ARE WIDELY BELIEVED IN ASIA TO HAVE CURATIVE POWERS...



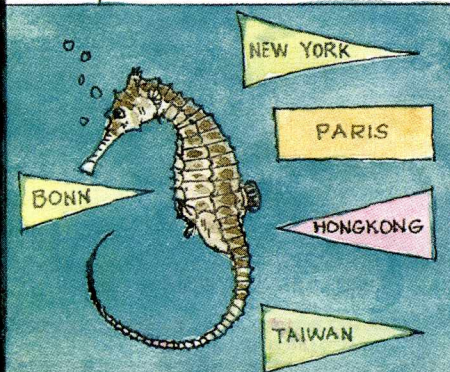
POTIONS MADE FROM SEAHORSE ARE USED TO MEET MANY CONDITIONS, INCLUDING ASTHMA, IMPOTENCE, INFERTILITY, EXHAUSTION, BALDNESS, RABIES, GAS PAINS, THROAT INFECTIONS AND SKIN DISEASES...



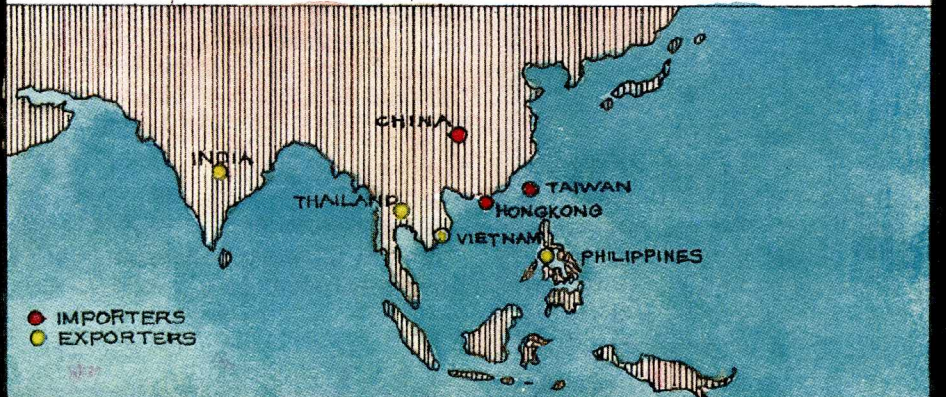
PRICE OF DRIED SEAHORSES IS STEEP. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT A KILO SELLS FOR ABOUT US \$1,200 IN HONGKONG...

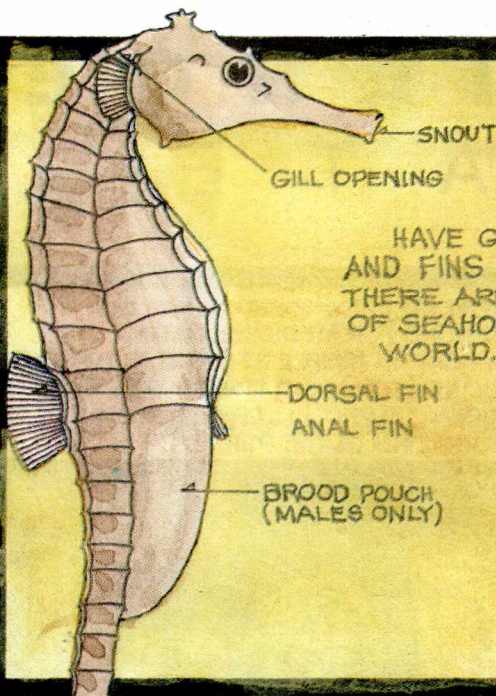


LIVE SEA HORSES ARE ALSO EXPORTED TO THE USA, EUROPE, JAPAN AND TAIWAN AS PART OF THE GLOBAL ORNAMENTAL TRADE IN MARINE FISHES, AND AS CURIDS TOO...



AT LEAST 32 NATIONS ARE INVOLVED IN TRADING SEAHORSES FROM ECUADOR TO ITALY TO THE USA. THE LARGEST IMPORTERS ARE CHINA, HONGKONG AND TAIWAN... AND THE LARGEST KNOWN EXPORTERS ARE INDIA, THE PHILIPPINES, THAILAND AND VIETNAM...



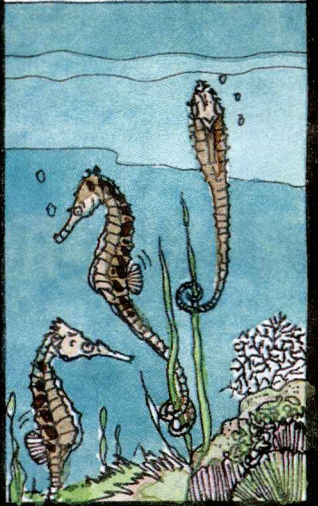


BY THEIR APPEARANCE THEY DON'T LOOK MUCH LIKE FISH, BUT SEAHORSE IS A FISH... THEY HAVE GILLS FOR BREATHING AND FINS FOR SWIMMING. THERE ARE ABOUT 35 KINDS OF SEAHORSE AROUND THE WORLD... SIZES RANGE FROM LESS THAN AN INCH (3cm) TO ALMOST ONE FOOT (30cm) IN LENGTH...

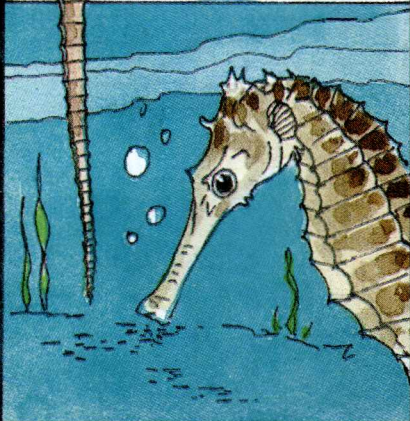
SEAHORSES HAVE A UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC. MALES BEAR PREGNANCY. THEY ARE MONOGAMOUS AND SEXUALLY FAITHFUL CREATURES...



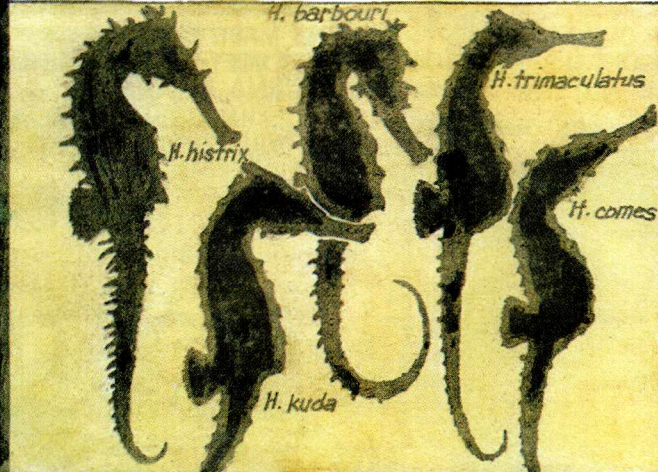
THEIR HABITAT INCLUDES SEA GRASS BEDS, CORAL REEFS, AND MANGROVE ESTUARIES...



TO EAT THEY USE THEIR SNOUT LIKE VACUUM CLEANERS TO SUCK IN MEALS, INCLUDING THE SMALL SHRIMP-LIKE ANIMALS CALLED MYSIDS...



THERE ARE AT LEAST EIGHT SPECIES OF SEAHORSE BEING TRADED IN THE PHILIPPINES AND ALL APPEARS TO HAVE COMMERCIAL VALUE. AMONG THEM ARE: *Hippocampus histrix*; *H. kuda*; *H. barbouri*; *H. trimaculatus*; AND *H. comes*...



THE HIGH BOUNTY PRICE MAKES THE SEAHORSE A THREATENED SPECIES - DEAD OR ALIVE! DEMAND FOR SEAHORSE FAR EXCEEDS SUPPLY... CUSTOMS STATISTICS SHOW THAT ANNUAL CONSUMPTION WITHIN ASIAN NATIONS ALONE MAY AMOUNT TO 45 TONS OF DRIED SEAHORSES ANNUALLY (ABOUT 16 MILLION INDIVIDUALS)... IS THE SEAHORSE DOOMED TO EXTINCTION? IS IT APOCALYPSE NOW FOR THEM?

FORTUNATELY NOT YET! A WORLD WIDE ADVOCACY GROUP HAS SNOW-BALLED INTO A SEAHORSE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE SEAHORSE, AND AT THE SAME TIME LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS FOR THOSE POOR FISHERMEN WHO HUNT THEM...

AMONG THOSE CONCERNED OF THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE SEAHORSE IS THE TIGBAUAN ILOILO-BASED R & D INSTITUTION - SOUTHEAST ASIAN FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT CENTER, AQUACULTURE DEPARTMENT (SEAFDEC/AQD).

RESEARCHERS AT SEAFDEC HAS EMBARKED ON A CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAM ON TWO SPECIES OF SEAHORSES - *H. KUDA* AND *H. BARBOURI*.

NOW ON ITS THIRD YEAR, THEY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY BRED THIRD GENERATION OFFSPRINGS FROM SEAHORSES BORN IN CAPTIVITY.

SUCH RESEARCH ACTIVITY GIVE THE SEAHORSE A NEW LEASE ON LIFE!



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