

Galapagos Parrotfish

Names:

Parrotfish, Vieja (Spanish), Budai (Japanese), and Scare (French). These are the names of for the Parrotfish family but each species has its own specific name that is descriptive of the body shape or color of the species.

Description:

The family *Scaridae* (Parrotfish) is one of the most common fish families found in the Galapagos and many individual species within this family inhabit the archipelago. *Scarus* are bony fishes that are described as having robust bodies with large scales becoming larger at the base of the tale. The teeth of Parrotfish are fused together to form beak-like plates in both jaws, hence the name Parrotfish. They have a single uninterrupted dorsal fin and large cycloid scales. There are four main species of Parrotfish found in the Galapagos and their descriptions are the following:

Blue Chin Parrotfish (*Scarus ghobban*):

Related to the Blue Parrotfish of the Caribbean, this Parrotfish is very common to the Indo-West Pacific and the California shores. Sexual dimorphism is conspicuous to this schooling species. The females are bright orange with five blue vertical stripes from head to tail. The males are teal with tinges of orange/pink and purple lines radiating behind the head. These fish are known to feed on *Pavona* and *Porites* corals.

Bumphead Parrotfish (*Scarus perrico*):

These fish have an unmistakably large bump on their heads that makes them hard to miss. Their colors range from green-blue to orange-yellow at the nose and the dorsal and caudal fins are blue or dark green. These solitary fish usually travel alone but sometimes they might be spotted in groups of three or four. The Bumphead's home range is the same as the Blue Chin Parrotfish. These fish are known to feed on *Pavona* and *Porites* corals.

Bicolor Parrotfish (*Scarus rubroviolaceus*):

In both sexes, the body is clearly marked by the males having a dark green anterior and light red-green posterior. The females, on the other hand, have a brownish-red anterior and a light brown posterior. Both sexes frequent corral reefs, travel in schools, and have a square caudal fin. This fish's home range is the same as the Bumphead and Blue Chin Parrotfish.

Azure Parrotfish (*Scarus compressus*):

The male Parrotfish of this species has the most pronounced color of all the Galapagos Parrotfish with its bright green body with each scale being outlined in orange with green streaks radiating from the eye ring. The Females have similar markings but they are blue to blue-grey in color. This fish's home range is from the Gulf of California to the Galapagos.

Feeding habits:

Parrotfish are known to be omnivores that will feed on pretty much anything from living corral to rotting fish carcasses. The main part of these fish's diet is made up of coral polyps which is ground up and passed through digestive system. Although their feeding habits are destructive to corral reefs, most of the bulk of white sand corral beaches is created by the gut of the Parrotfish.

Mating Habits:

Parrotfish are known to be able to change sexes throughout their life span. There are many different patterns for sex-change. Some species will begin life as males and switch to females (protandry), and others switch from female to male (protogyny). Further still, some will change sex in both directions, and others will be both sexes at the same time. Male Parrotfish are known to have harems of females that may change gender if the male dies. For most species, initial phase fish are usually males that have the beginnings of the adult male coloration. However, initial phase fish may include sexually mature females.

Habitat:

Parrotfish stay within shallow waters of no more than about 70 meters in depth. At night Parrotfish cram themselves into cracks and some species even secrete a thick coat of mucus as a sort of sleeping bag. This mucus is may serve to protect the fish from infection by parasites or it is thought to mask their scent from nocturnal predators.

Life Expectancy:

5-7 years in the wild and up to 10 years in domestic settings.

Scientific Classification:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Actinopterygii

Order: Perciformes

Family: **Scaridae**



Blue Chin Parrotfish



Bumphead Parrotfish



Bicolor Parrotfish



Azure Parrotfish

Sources

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