

Clepticus parrae (Creole Wrasse)

Family: Labridae (Wrasses)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Creole wrasse, *Clepticus parrae*.

[<https://rollingharbour.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/creole-wrasse-c2a9melinda-riger-g-b-scuba-copy-5.jpg>, downloaded 2 February 2016]

TRAITS. The creole wrasse is a moderately elongated fish, thicker than the characteristic cigar-shaped bodies of other wrasses (Smith, 1997). The length of the creole wrasse varies from 10-30cm, and it has a total of 12 dorsal spines, 3 anal spines, 10 dorsal soft rays and 12-13 anal soft rays. During the initial phase the creole wrasse is purple/blue in colour, and upon reaching the terminal phase they appear purple. Larger individuals display a wash of yellow on the lower two thirds of the body (Fig. 2) (Randall, 1996). In the adult creole wrasse the caudal fins are lunate (crescent-shaped), which allows them to maintain a rapid speed when they are being preyed on (Seaworld.org, 2016).

DISTRIBUTION. The creole wrasse can be found in the western Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, from Bermuda, the southern USA, and the Bahamas to Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago (Fig 3). The creole wrasse is common throughout this range. For example, it is common in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea (Choat et al., 2010).

HABITAT. They swim at depths ranging from 10-30m, although some can go down to 40m. This species can be found most commonly in the water column above coral reefs (Fig. 4). Schools of the creole wrasse are larger at high densities near the reef pelagic (open water) zones (Warner and Robertson, 1978) (Fig. 5).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The creole wrasse is the only plankton-feeding species of wrasse (McGinley, 2011), other species of wrasses are carnivores, and this difference influenced their morphology and behaviour to show similar characters to that of other planktivores. They also feed on small jelly fish, pteropods, pelagic tunicates and several invertebrate larvae. The creole wrasse feeds either near the reef or at the sandy bottom, during the day or at night (McGinley, 2011). The creole wrasse has a protruding mouth that they use to catch their prey, and they depend heavily on their eyesight to detect prey.

BEHAVIOUR. Creole wrasses use their pectoral fins to swim, and their style of swimming makes it seem like they are flying through the turbulent waters. Creole wrasses are planktivores therefore they do not need to be fast swimmers to catch their food. When creole wrasse are being preyed on, they utilize their fins and elongate and streamlined body (McGinley, 2011) to become fast swimmers, and return to the safety of the corals.

REPRODUCTION. One of the key characteristics of the creole wrasse is its ability to change sex from female to male. This means that they are protogynous hermaphrodites. De Mitcheson and Liu (2008) define protogynous hermaphroditism as the process by which females are expressed as males later on in their life. In the initial phase during the life cycle of the creole wrasse, all of them are females, and at 15-18cm in length, they change to males and also assume their terminal phase coloration. Mating usually occurs in the mid afternoon and is not seasonal. Firstly, the male and female court, and then they spawn in the water column (McGinley, 2011). Once fertilization is successful, the eggs hatch and the larvae enter the pelagic stage of the life cycle, where they continue being larvae until large enough to settle on the reef.

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. Large creole wrasse with yellow patches on the abdomen.

[<https://rollingharbour.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/creole-wrasse-school-c2a9melinda-riger-g-b-scuba-copy.jpg>, downloaded 14 February 2016]



Fig. 3. Geographic distribution of the creole wrasse.

[<http://www.discoverlife.org/mp/20q?search=Clepticus+parrae&l=english>, downloaded 2 March 2016]



Fig. 4. A school of creole wrasses swimming near coral.

[<https://rollingharbour.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/creole-wrasse-c2a9melinda-riger-g-b-scuba-copy-7.jpg>, downloaded 6 February 2016]



Fig. 5. Large school of creole wrasses.

[<https://rollingharbour.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/creole-wrasse-school-c2a9melinda-riger-g-b-scuba-copy.jpg>, downloaded 6 February 2016]

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