

## CLEANER SHRIMP

The various species of cleaner shrimp are some of the most often encountered shrimp in the aquarium trade today. Their fascinating behaviors and vibrant colors and patterns are favorites among reef aquarists. Many different shrimp species are considered cleaner shrimp. Some of the most common are Skunk Cleaner Shrimp (*Lysmata amboinensis*), Blood Shrimp (*Lysmata debelius*), Coral



Blood Shrimp (*Lysmata debelius*). Image by Tim Wong.



Skunk Cleaner Shrimp (*Lysmata amboinensis*). Image by Sabine Penisson.

Banded Shrimp (*Stenopus hispidus*), Golden Coral Banded Shrimp (*Stenopus zanzibaricus*), Blue Coral Banded Shrimp (*Stenopus tenuirostris*), and Peppermint Shrimp (*Lysmata wurdemanni*). Some commensal *Periclimenes* shrimp (such as Pederson Shrimp (*Periclimenes pedersoni*) and Yucatanicus Shrimp (*Periclimenes yucatanicus*)) and some shrimp in the *Urocaridella* genus are recognized as cleaner shrimp, though they are also considered anemone shrimp.

Cleaner shrimp get their name from the fact that in the wild, they are known to clean fish. This cleaning consists of the shrimp crawling along the body of a fish and even entering the fish's mouth and gills in order to remove parasites and dead skin. This is most often seen with Skunk Cleaner Shrimp. In the wild, they will set up a cleaning station where they hang upside down in a cave or under a rock ledge and fish will seek them out for their services. Skunk Cleaner Shrimp have even been observed cleaning inside the mouths of moray eels. Most fish will not eat cleaner shrimp because they know the shrimp provide them with an important service. In this mutualistic relationship, the fish gets cleaned and the shrimp gets a meal.

Skunk Cleaner Shrimp are one of the most colorful and active shrimp available in the aquarium trade. This species is red and yellow with a white stripe running from head to tail and occurs throughout the Red Sea and Indo-Pacific. They can live for over 2 years and grow to about 3 inches in length. Because they are hermaphrodites, any two individuals who are put together can form a pair. It is a common misconception that one must purchase cleaner shrimp as a "true pair." Although the cleaning behavior of Skunk Cleaner Shrimp is

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