

MAY/JUNE 2010

# nau**ique**

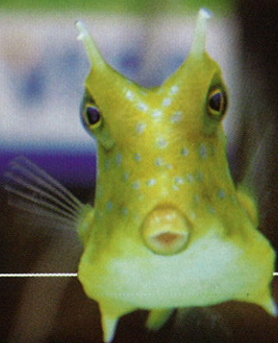
lifestyles@rafflesmarina

**WESTSIDE JAM 2010...  
A HUGE HIT!**

Plus special Mother's Day and Father's  
Day menus for the whole family!

**CHIANG MAI CHARMS**  
Renew in the calm of Thailand

**NAGANO ON THE GO**  
Japan's history and culture  
under one roof



## Reefs At Risk: The Aquarium Trade

Far from mere eye-candy, the ornamental fish trade is putting coral reefs at the greatest risk.

By Orla Doherty, Managing Director, PCRFB

Cowfish in a Bangkok store aquarium

Well-stocked aquariums are exquisite. The colourful substrate and vivid fish allow people to view the underwater world, wherever they are. While this can be a great educational tool, some aspects of the aquarium trade are causing great devastation to the natural environment, particularly to the coral reefs of Southeast Asia.

Most of the coral supplied to the aquarium trade comes from Indonesia, Fiji and Vietnam with up to 80 per cent of it being imported into the USA. Ironically, the USA bans the collection of stony corals and live rock from most of its own reefs, choosing instead to import from distant coral reefs.

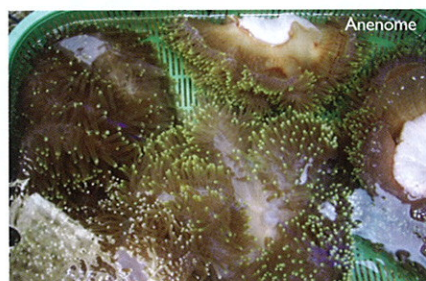
However it is the ornamental fish trade, which exposes coral reefs to the greatest risk. A staggering 85 per cent of the world's aquarium fish come from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, which includes Southeast Asia. Most of these fish are caught using poison, especially cyanide and even household bleach. Angelfish, seahorses, surgeonfish, damselfish, boxfish, puffer fish, butterflyfish and more are hunted down on remote reefs with squeeze bottles of poison, then shipped around the world in plastic bags of seawater. The Philippines and Indonesia each supply about a third of the global demand for

surrounding reef) will die, but just the right amount simply anaesthetises them.

The greatest tragedy of the cyanide fishing industry is that 90 per cent of the catch will die in transit because the poison slowly destroys the fish's internal organs. In other words, the fish never actually make it to their aquarium destination. Moreover the ruined reef habitat reduces the chances of future generations of fish surviving to adulthood.

The Banggai cardinalfish illustrates this pernicious trade. This extremely popular species, which is now listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List, occurs naturally in a small group of islands in Indonesia. Fishermen there are paid approximately US\$0.02 per fish. For this dismal sum, they poison the coral reef with cyanide and smash it up with rocks and sticks to collect the small fish. By the time the fish reach the aquarium retailers, they are sold for about US\$20 each, a thousand times the amount paid for them at their source.

*If you are an aquarium gardener, please see the Marine Aquarium Council ([www.aquariumcouncil.org](http://www.aquariumcouncil.org)), an organisation that is working to certify legitimate fishing practices and shipping methods for the aquarium trade, and offers guidelines for aquarium enthusiasts.*



Anemone



Coral tank



Shrimp