

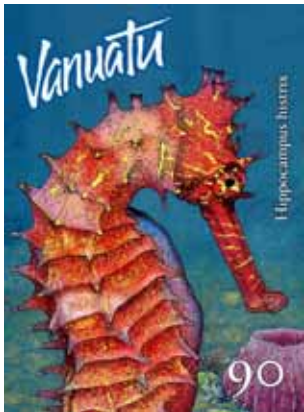


SEAHORSES of VANUATU



Seahorse species number up to 35, of which half inhabit the Indo-Australian region. They live in shallow, inshore waters often among seaweeds and swim in a vertical position propelled by a single dorsal fin, which “waves” at up to 35 times per second. The pectoral fins oscillate at the same rate and the head is used for steering. The tail is used to cling to objects enabling the seahorse to remain in the upright position. Food consists of tiny crustaceans or very small baby fishes.

Two unusual features are exhibited by seahorses. The first is their ability to swivel each of their eyes independently in a more pronounced fashion than other fish and secondly the male seahorse receives, carries and fertilises the eggs and retains them until after “labour” when the tiny baby seahorses emerge after a period of 4-5 weeks.

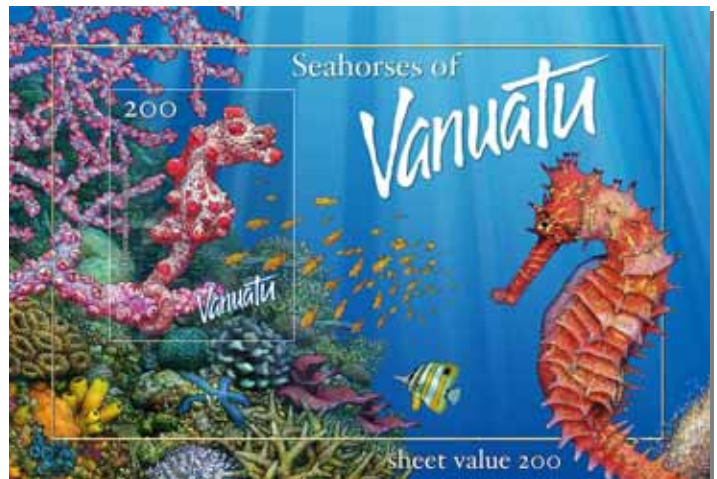


The stamp issue features three seahorse found in the warm waters around the archipelago:

60 vatu stamp *Hippocampus kuda* Ranging in colour from yellow to reddish brown and black, this seahorse grows to 300mm and is found from estuaries to seaward reefs at depths of +30m.

90 vatu stamp *Hippocampus*

histrix identified by its long snout and very spiny surface, this seahorse grows to 150mm and is rarely encountered. Bright orange-red in colour it occurs in shallow sheltered reefs and seagrass beds.



200 vatu stamp *Hippocampus bargibanti* This pygmy seahorse lives only on Gorgonian corals (sea fans) where it blends in extremely well with its surroundings as camouflage. The colour of the fish matches the gorgonian it inhabits, and the body tubercles look very similar to the polyps of the gorgonian. It is found of 16-40 m and grows to only 20mm in length.

Collectors Notes:

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| Designer: | Gavin Ryan, Queensland, Australia |
| Printer: | BDT Printers, Dublin, Ireland |
| Process: | Offset Litho |
| Stamp Size: | 38mm x 30.56mm. |
| Mini Sheet size: | 105 x 70mm |
| Perforation Gauge: | 13.75 x 13.75. |
| Denominations: | 60, 90, and 200 vatu. |
| Paper: | 110 gsm, gummed stamp paper. |
| Period of Sale: | 24 September, 2003 for a period of 2 years. |

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