



BUTTERFLYFISHES

FAMILY: CHAETODONTIDAE

DID YOU KNOW?

Some butterflyfish have a defensive stance - they lower their head and raise their back fins alike a bull about to charge.

WHERE AT AQWA?

Search for butterflyfish as they flutter through the warm waters of AQWA's Far North coast.

SIZE: <20CM

DIET: CORAL POLYPS CRUSTACEANS

MAIN PREDATOR: EELS, LARGER FISH

HABITAT: CORAL REEF

FOUND: TROPICAL INDIAN, PACIFIC, ATLANTIC OCEANS

FLUTTERING FISHES

Butterflyfish are named for their bold colours and the false eye-spots, known as ocelli, which resemble those of butterflies. Their colours, patterns and fluttering swimming style are all about attitude! While butterflyfish have no dangerous features, their striking appearance is able to startle and confuse predators.

HAIRY TEETH AND SKINNY SNOOTS

Butterflyfish have the family name Chaetodontidae, meaning "hair-teeth". This describes the bristle-like teeth they use to scrape coral polyps and algae from the reef. Their mouths are often elongated into long snouts to help pick at and reach their food.

Their small, narrow body shape is ideal for manouvering around the reef, slipping through crevices and short bursts of speed.

ONE BIG FAMILY

Butterflyfish are one of the largest fish families on tropical coral reefs, with more than 130 species and at least 60 of them found in Australian waters.

The largest genus Chaetodon contains around 90 species that are the most "typical" butterflyfish. The rest of the family is made up of coralfish and bannerfish, who possess the same impressive patterns, but are distinguished by colour and body shape.

FISH PYJAMAS

Butterflyfish are active scavengers during the day, then at night they put on their pyjamas! They are able to dull their vibrant colours to help them blend in to the darker water at night while they sleep.