



# Handfish: Giving underwater high-fives to one of the quirkiest fishes!

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**D**EEP in the ocean, there lives a fascinating and mysterious creature known as the handfish. Scientists and marine enthusiasts are intrigued by its peculiar appearance and distinctive lifestyle.

Handfish are a type of small fish belonging to the family Brachionichthyidae, commonly found in southern Australia and Tasmania waters. They measure from a few centimetres to around 15 centimetres long. They display a range of colours and patterns, from subtle browns and greens to bold oranges and yellows. Some species exhibit intricate markings and decorations, making them easily noticeable on the sandy ocean floor. What distinguishes them from other fish is their unique way of moving. Instead of swimming,

handfish walk on the ocean floor using their highly adaptable and modified pectoral fins, which look like hands, hence the name “handfish”. These fins have finger-like extensions that help them grip onto rocks and other surfaces on the ocean bed as they move around.

These fish are relatively sedentary creatures, as they prefer to stay still on the ocean floor most of the time. They are skilled ambush predators; for instance, the spotted handfish uses its spotted and patchy appearance to blend in with the rocky and algae-filled ocean bed perfectly. This allows them to stay hidden from both predators and potential prey. They wait quietly for unsuspecting prey to swim by before swiftly attacking with their quick reflex. Their primary food sources