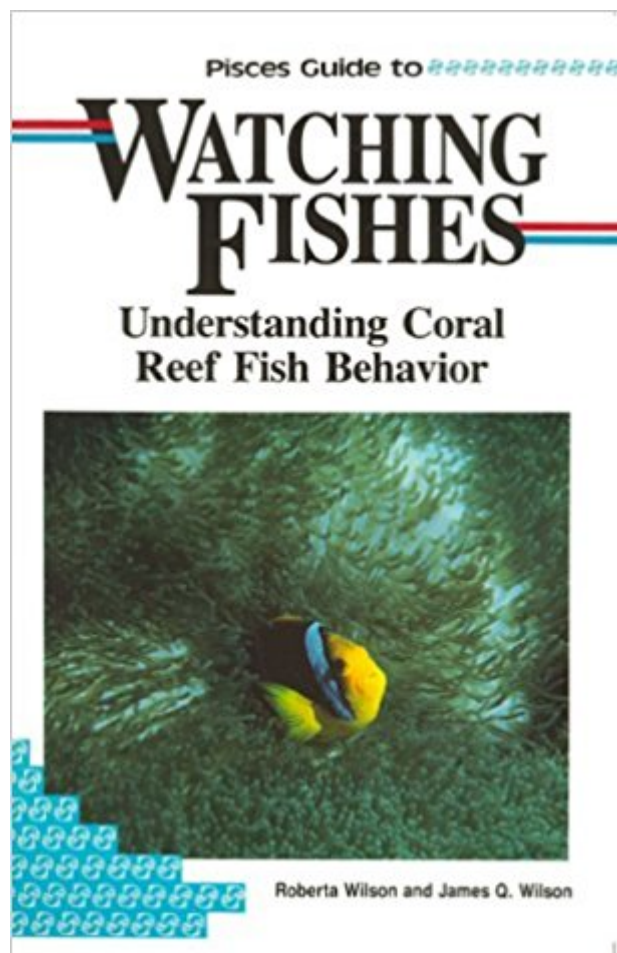




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# Pisces Guide To Watching Fishes: Understanding Coral Reef Fish Behavior (Lonely Planet Diving & Snorkeling Great Barrier Reef)



## Synopsis

You'll discover answers to many interesting questions in this remarkable guide to the lives and behavior of coral reef fishes and invertebrates. Beautifully illustrated with color photos and black-and-white illustrations, "Watching Fishes" gives you fascinating insights into the "how's, why's, when's, and where's" of dozens of common species that inhabit these unique ecosystems. Indispensable to anyone who enjoys the teeming, colorful world of coral reefs, this delightful book helps answer those nagging "I wonder why...." questions we've all experienced when diving or snorkelling over a coral reef. Focusing on key behavioral aspects of reproduction, territoriality, swimming, eating, etc..., this enlightening text describes in non-scientific, simple language why the creatures that inhabit coral reefs behave as they do. You'll also find a chapter on sharks that addresses popular misconceptions about them; and a chapter that vividly portrays how a typical reef changes from dawn, through the day, to dusk, then into the night. Roberta Wilson is an amateur naturalist who has been exploring the tropical reefs of the Caribbean Sea, the Red Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and the Great Barrier Reef for almost 30 years. She is the illustrator of this book. James Q. Wilson is a professor of management and public policy at UCLA, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the National Association of Underwater Instructors.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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black-and-white illustrations, "Watching Fishes" gives you fascinating insights into the "how's, why's, when's, and where's" of dozens of common species that inhabit these unique ecosystems. Indispensable to anyone who enjoys the teeming, colorful world of coral reefs, this delightful book helps answer those nagging "I wonder why...." questions we've all experienced when diving or snorkelling over a coral reef. Focusing on key behavioral aspects of reproduction, territoriality, swimming, eating, etc..., this enlightening text describes in non-scientific, simple language why the creatures that inhabit coral reefs behave as they do. You'll also find a chapter on sharks that addresses popular misconceptions about them; and a chapter that vividly portrays how a typical reef changes from dawn, through the day, to dusk, then into the night. Roberta Wilson is an amateur naturalist who has been exploring the tropical reefs of the Caribbean Sea, the Red Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and the Great Barrier Reef for almost 30 years. She is the illustrator of this book. James Q. Wilson is a professor of management and public policy at UCLA, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the National Association of Underwater Instructors.

After I'd dived and snorkeled in the same spot more than a few times, I found myself wondering: what are those fish doing? Why are there such huge differences in what I see at 7AM from what I see at 5PM? Are those fish mating or fighting? While this book only begins to answer those questions--I'd love to see a newer edition with research since the early 90's--it does tell the careful observer what to look for, which adds greatly to the experience of diving and snorkeling. A caveat, however: if you don't already know the major fish families (such as parrotfish, surgeonfish, wrasses, butterflyfish, and so on), you'll find the book somewhat incomprehensible. I'd label this book as Step 2 in becoming a knowledgeable observer, with Step 1 as learning the fish families. (And for that, I'd get a regional guide for wherever you dive--the fish families are the same world-wide, although the species are not.) Note: while I criticize this book for being (slightly) out of date, that doesn't make the information useless--far from it.

With the proliferation of fish identification books (many which are excellent...but there are MANY!), it was refreshing to finally read a reference guide devoted solely to coral reef fish behavior. It adds another dimension to my underwater observations, and further enhances my time in my favorite hang-out place! I am an underwater photographer and give a number of slide shows -- it is nice to be able to go beyond the "roll call" as a certain fish flashes on the screen--after reading this book, I'm in a better position to add interesting facts about the given fish's behavior, mating practices, sensory capacities, etc. THOSE are the things that perk up an audience's ears. A comprehensive,

well-written guide, authoritative without being dry; the authors have a love of the undersea world that is reflected in their writing. I'm frankly surprised that I don't note this text in the bookshelves of more dive shops, liveaboards, etc. Like Paul Humann's Trilogy, it deserves to be a part of the "scuba diver's canon".

This book is outstanding on so many levels... It has a basic intro to coral reef biology and to the fishes. It then goes on to discuss the various aspects of fish life. Eating, breeding, various interactions are all covered. Look for the parts on schooling and social life of coral reef fishes. etc... The authors manage to bring a large body of scientific reference material together and make it accessible to anyone interested in coral reef fishes. If you are a diver or snorkeler then you will enjoy this wealth of information that will go a long way to describe the intricate behaviors in this most complicated of habitats. If you are a reef aquarium hobbyist then you will learn why fish act the way they do. If you are a professional then you will appreciate the way that this book brings in the journal literature. There are 19 pages of bibliography, and although it might be a bit dated many of the articles are classics.

New snorkelers are very movement sensitive. They are looking for things moving on the reef. The more colorful, the better. After you get past this stage, you start asking questions. Why do some fish have a false "eyespot" and others do not? Why do some fish, well, swim like a fish, while others swim like a box of matches with wings? Why do parrotfish spend so much time biting a nutrient-poor reef. Why not go after real prey? These types of questions are answered in this book. Written from the perspectives of ecology and behavior (with the emphasis on behavioral ecology), the Wilsons put together a readable and accurate (to the standards of the literature in the mid 1980s) work on fish behavior. Fish are so much more deserving than simply lumping them into taxonomic groupings. This book helps you get to that next level, the "why" stage.

We run charter yachts and take our guests snorkeling on reefs daily. I borrowed this book over 10 years ago, and still remember how incredibly interesting it was, not only for our own understanding of the ecosystem we enjoy so much, but also for the great information it gives us to share with our guests who are eager to learn about the beautiful reefs and the colorful fish they see. As another reviewer said, we can now go beyond just naming the fish we see and provide a broader explanation of their characteristics and behaviour. I'm thrilled to see the book back in print.

I agree with the previous reviewers--an invaluable, scholarly, and readable work that discusses such interesting but poorly understood subjects such as why tropical fish tend to be brightly colored, how schooling fish swim in close coordination, and whether anemones benefit from their relationship with anemone fish. It's a shame that tropical dive operations haven't made this required reading for their dive students.

An interesting and entertaining reference for experiencing the reef environment. I took it with me on my latest snorkel trip and found almost word for word examples of real life fish behavior. This book is best for divers or snorkelers that have some experience with the reef habitat.

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