

Anemone and Clownfish

“Nestling among the venomous stinging tentacles of a sea anemone seems like a very bad survival strategy -- unless you and the anemone have some kind of an arrangement. Clown anemonefish (*Amphiprion akindynos*) and sea anemones have evolved just such a relationship. As juveniles, clownfish perform a ritual of "anemone rubbing." Initially protected from stings by a thick mucus coat, the clownfish incorporates anemone mucus into its own coat until the anemone no longer stings it, apparently recognizing the fish as part of itself. From then on, they defend each other, and clownfish have even been seen dragging food to their host anemone.

“Reef animals are masters of disguise, and sea anemones are no exception. Attached to the reef by a suction disc, tentacles swaying with the current, they are the animals perhaps most often mistaken as plants. The illusion is further reinforced by the presence of two or more commensal clownfish among the tentacles. But the clownfish and anemone are a predatory team, working side-by-side and sharing food. In addition, the clownfish fight off intruders, such as anemone-eating butterflyfish, and the stinging cells (nematocysts) of the anemone deter potential clownfish predators.” From

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/survival/coral/partners.html>