

Eggs Can Live 10 Years—

Amazing Little Briny Shrimp Strange Creature of the Sea

While larger and more colorful cousins are winning popularity contests with gourmets and cooks, the midget of the shrimp family has its own select circle of admirers.

In recent years, according to the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the brine shrimp has become a standard food for young tropical aquarium fishes, and is also used as food in fish hatcheries.

This is probably the shrimp the youngster meets when a science class watches eggs hatching under a microscope. It is also considered a superior organism for use in testing insecticides.

About a third of an inch long when fully grown, little brinies can make scant claim to beauty. The baby shrimp have one eye and one main set of legs; adults view the world through two stalked compound eyes, and have 11 pairs of swimming legs, with gills occurring about midway on the legs.

Color depends on the concentration and the chemical nature of salts in the water the shrimp lives in, and may range from pale yellow-green to blood red.

In spite of the small size, brine shrimp possess a talent for survival that whales might envy. If stored in a dry, fairly cool place, the eggs of this remarkable creature will remain alive for at least 10 years.

The discovery of this characteristic, in 1947, led to commercial harvesting of brine shrimp eggs for marketing throughout the world as a source of food for aquarium fish.

Although fish cannot digest the tough shells of the eggs, the eggs are easily hatched in salted tap water to provide live baby shrimp—a diet relished by most fish.

Brine shrimp are found throughout the world, but can live and reproduce only in water with a high salt content, such as that found in natural salt lakes or in ponds where sea water is evaporated to obtain salt.

In Utah's Great Salt Lake, for example, the salinity of the water was recorded at about 25 per cent in 1950, compared to the

3 per cent salinity of sea water.

The brine shrimp sometimes congregate at the surface of the G.S.L., forming ribbon-like patterns nearly half a mile wide and extending miles into the lake.

Methods of collecting and processing brine shrimp eggs, as well as the life history of the species, are described in the Bureau's Fishery Leaflet 527, "Brine Shrimp."

The leaflet is available from the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Publications Division, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Va., 22209.