

Giant Australian Cuttlefish

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Habitat

Giant Australian Cuttlefish are found along the coastlines and in the seas of cool, southern Australian waters. They mainly live around rocky reefs where they can hide in ledges and under seaweed. Cuttlefish only live for one to two years and after mating seasons many cuttlebones wash up on beaches.

Diet

Giant Australian Cuttlefish are carnivores. They eat fish, crab, lobster and shrimp. Cuttlefish sneak up on the prey by using camouflage to look like a piece of seaweed. They swim slowly behind their prey, then shoot out a high-speed pair of tentacles that have toothed suckers at the end to capture their food. They kill their victim by biting with their beak then rip up their food using a tooth-covered tongue.

Life stages

Hatching from an egg, baby Giant Australian Cuttlefish look like tiny perfect cuttlefish and quickly take cover in nearby rocks or seaweed. They immediately begin hunting small crabs and shrimp. Mating season for cuttlefish is one big show! Male cuttlefish stretch out and display moving stripes along their body. Large males fight other males. Some smaller male cuttlefish display patterns to look like females so they can sneak past other males.

Threats

Giant Australian Cuttlefish are threatened by human activity, especially from fishing in breeding grounds. Overfishing also removes their food sources. Due to their short life span, it is very important to ensure cuttlefish breeding locations are safe during mating season. Marine national parks are important to protect the animals' habitat and ensure safe breeding grounds for the next generations.

Conservation

In Victoria, there are 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries many of which protect the cuttlefishes and their habitat. Marine rangers and volunteers care for ocean habitats, beaches and coastlines. This includes surveying coastal and under-water areas, recording and stopping illegal fishing. In some places there are fishing bans or restrictions on catching cuttlefish, which protect breeding grounds and make safe places for the next generation to grow.

Features and adaptations

- 1 Soft skin that can rapidly change colour and patterns to camouflage
- 2 Swim slowly using their fins along their body and can get away quickly by squirting water through a funnel underneath their body
- 3 Are colourblind and have 'W' shaped pupils, which scientists think helps them to see in front and behind at the same time.
- 4 Have one strong cuttlebone that contains layers of air that helps them float
- 5 Have blue blood, three hearts, a beak and a donut-shaped brain
- 6 Squirt black ink clouds to confuse predators, while they dart away
- 7 Cuttlefish are not fish, they are cephalopods, similar to squid and octopus

