



MOLLUSK SECTION

CUTTLEFISH - Researched and written by Luc Lampietti, aged 12, New Jersey, USA.

ABOUT

Cuttlefish (Sepiida) resemble squid, but despite their name they actually are mollusks. They will often range in size between 15 cm and 25 cm. Cuttlefish consist of eight arms and two tentacles. Much like the octopus, the Cuttlefish can change both color and texture to camouflage itself in the surrounding habitat. In order to accomplish this feat they use the muscles in their dermis to change the texture and due to thousands of pigment cells they are able to disguise themselves very quickly. Their average diet consists of small crustaceans such as shrimp and crabs or small fish. Their suckered covered arms are used to grasp and prevent their prey from escaping. Cuttlefish have predators too, such as sharks or humans who use Cuttlefish in cuisine in parts of Europe such as Italy and Portugal, further east in Asia, and south in the Mediterranean. This fascinating species of mollusk resides in the Mediterranean, North and Baltic Seas, Asia, and South Africa. Cuttlefish live in the continental shelf and prefer warm waters. Cuttlefish are dioecious which means that they have separate sexes. They have a special arm in order to transfer sperm and mate. They lay relatively large eggs on the ocean floor, which contain yolk for the young to survive on once hatched. In order to protect the eggs from lurking predators the eggs possess a layer of ink to camouflage them with the ocean floor. The babies grow at a fast rate and in no time will start to feed on young shrimp.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Cuttlefish are becoming endangered due to our growth in population. They are considered a delicious food to eat in most of Asia and Europe. We humans enslave these animals in tanks thinking it is right to use them as pets. This mollusk is a complex animal; instead of adjusting its lenses to focus it has the ability to reshape its entire eye! The Cuttlefish has only one bone, which is named the cuttlebone hence the name. Due to its soft skin it relies on its camouflage as well as its ink sac. If in a threatened position it is able to create a cloud of ink along with creating large bubbles of ink to confuse and occasionally paralyze the predator's senses. This creature is a fascinating animal, which we still know very little about.

For more detailed information visit: <http://marinebio.org/species.asp> or <http://www.pbs.org/wbgh/nova>.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which country's cuisine contains Cuttlefish?

- A. United States
- B. Italy
- C. Guinea
- D. Brazil

Answer is B.

