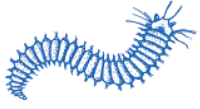


Identification Guide

Worms

Although often well hidden, worms are some of the most numerous animals on the shore. Many, like bristle worms, are free-living and burrow under rocks and in the sand. There are also some that build shell tubes around their bodies that fix them to the rocks and protect them from drying out at low tide. Tubeworms need to wait for the tide to bring them food and oxygen.



Bristle worm



Tube worms

Molluscs

What amazing diversity of shapes and sizes in one group of animals — bivalves attached to rocks, slow-moving sea snails and jet propelled octopus! Victoria has over 2000 species of molluscs, many of which are found on rocky shores. These are some of the major groups of molluscs found on our shores:



Chiton

Chitons (Ky-tons)

These grazing animals are common both on and under rocks in some locations. The shell of a chiton is made up of eight interlocking plates that give the chiton greater mobility over bumpy rocks.

Snails and slugs (Gastropods)

The animals in this group vary from having a spiral shell, such as those seen in dog whelks, cone shaped shells like limpets, reduced shells like sea hares, or even no shell at all like nudibranchs (or sea slugs). Shells with a round opening like a warrener snail are herbivorous snails. They use their tongue to scrape seaweed off the rocks. Shells with a tapered opening like a dog whelk, are usually carnivorous, they can drill holes into other animals!



Dog whelk



Limpet



Sea hare



Warrener or Turbo



Abalone



Elephant snail



Short tailed nudibranch

Bivalves

These molluscs have two shells that protect the animal inside. Mussels are a common bivalve on the shore. At low tide the two shells are closed tightly. When covered by the tide the shells are opened slightly to allow the animal to filter the water for small animals and plants called plankton so the mussels can feed.



Mussel

Octopus

These are the jet-propelled members of the snail family! Octopus can push a jet of water out of their bodies to move quickly through the water or wander around on their tentacles. During the day octopus hide in rocky crevices and emerge at night to feed. You might be lucky enough to catch sight of these animals stalking or catching crabs in rockpools at dusk. They vary in size from the small but highly venomous Blue-ringed Octopus to the large Maori Octopus that has a body the size of a football.



Maori octopus



Blue ringed octopus

Crustaceans

(Pronounced: crust - ay - shuns)

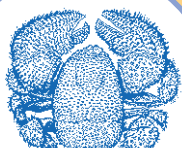
This group of animals have jointed legs and a hard shell over their body which they need to shed as they grow. (Next time you find a 'dead' crab on the shore, look (and smell) carefully — it may just be a discarded moulted shell.)



Male crab
Narrow abdomen



Female crab
Large abdomen



Hairy stone crab



Decorator or seaweed crab



Red bait crab



Shore crab

Crabs

These animals usually have four pairs of legs and two pincers. They are scavengers and feed on a wide variety of dead material that collects on the shoreline. To keep their gills moist and to hide from predators, crabs often shelter under rocks at low tide.

By carefully turning a crab over you can see if it is a male or female (possibly with eggs). Use the pictures to help you



Female crab with eggs

Sand hoppers

Lifting washed up seaweed often reveals these small animals feasting on the debris. They in turn are an important food source for animals like fish and birds.



Sand hopper

Barnacles

Often confused with snails like limpets, barnacles have jointed legs that they use like a small net to capture food at high tide. They have a hard shell cemented onto the rock with two plates that can be opened when the animals are covered by water.



Barnacle

Cnidarians

(Pronounced: nye - dare - ee - ans)

The animals in this group share a common feature — tentacles covered in powerful stinging cells! Sea anemones and jellies sting and paralyse their prey with their tentacles before moving it into their mouth.

Sea anemones

Often looking like blobs of jelly on the rocks, these animals have a bag like body with only one opening. When under water the tentacles are extended out of the body and are withdrawn as the tide retreats. Victoria has a diverse range of colourful anemones including red, green and orange. The sand anemone is a common anemone on our shores which covers its body with sand grains for protection.



Sea anemone

Sea jellies

Sea jellies are like upside down anemones that can drift around in the water and use their tentacles to catch prey. Even washed up jellies can still sting. It's best not to handle them.

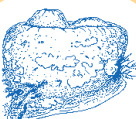


Sea jelly

Ascidians

(Pronounced: as - sid - ee - ans)

These animals look more like lumpy rocks and are often missed while exploring rocky shores. The most common intertidal ascidian is the "Cunjevoi". By looking closely along the lower shoreline at low tide, you may notice a "rock or lump" that has two small bumps on top that sometimes squirt little jets of water. The two bumps are the in and out openings that allow the animals to filter the water for their food. They have a tough skin that protects them from drying out when exposed at low tide.

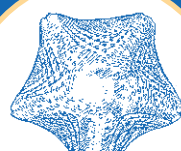


Cunjevoi or ascidian

Echinoderms

(Pronounced: ee - kyne - oh - derms)

Star shaped, spiky and round or long like a cucumber — the variety of shapes in this group is amazing. Named echinoderms because of the spines or plates found under their skin, these animals also have small, water filled tube feet with suckers on the end to help them move, grip onto rocks and hold their food.



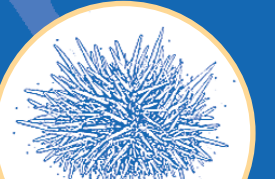
Little green seastar



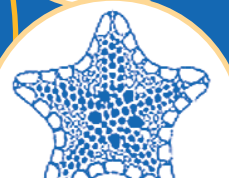
Common seastar



Eleven armed seastar



Sea urchin



Biscuit seastar



Sea cucumber

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