



FACTSHEET

Sandy Floors



Sandy Floors

Habitat type: Sandy floors

Habitat description:

At first sight, sandy floors seem almost empty of life. There are no plants like the seagrass meadows and there are no reefs. Nevertheless, sandy floors are important to the marine environment. The sand itself sieves the seawater and filters nutrients out. This means bacteria and other microorganisms can live in the sand and near its surface.

Detritus (waste matter) builds up in the sandy floor, where decomposers like the sea cucumber filter feed the sand. These creatures clean the sand particles of the waste matter and this forms their food. The waste from the sea cucumber is clean sand.

Sandy floors are also home to molluscs and crustaceans. Some of these creatures use the sand as their base and filter the seawater to feed on nutrients and microorganisms.

Most creatures live in the sand and emerge usually at night to feed or breed. The Bubble Shell, Moon Shell, Razor Clam, the Two-spot Swimming Crab, the Blue Manna Swimming Crab and a variety of other shells and crustaceans can be found living in this habitat.

When snorkelling, look out for tracks left on the sandy floors by the movements these creatures. You can also see rays in these sandy shallows and fish like the Silver Drummer and Western Buffalo Bream swimming there in schools.

Conservation Status:

The waters around Rottnest Island are a designated Marine Reserve. Also, some parts of Rottnest' sandy floors are included the Marine Sanctuary Zones shown in the *Rottnest Island Marine Management Strategy (2007)*.





Local species:

Sea Cucumber (*Stichopus mollis*),
Mantis Shrimp (*Squilla mantis*), Two-spot
Swimming Crab (*Ovalipes australiensis*),
Blue Manna Crab (*Portunus pelagicus*),
Dog Whelks (*Nassarius glans particeps*),
Southern Baler Shell (*Melo miltonis*),
Olive Shell (*Olive australis*), Creep Shell
(*Rhinoclavis bituberculatum*), Moon
Shell (*Polinices conicus*), Triangular Razor
Clam (*Pinna bicolor*), Fan Shell (*Chlamys
asperrimus*), Eagle Ray (*Myliobatis
australis*), Common Sting Ray (*Urolophus
testaceus*), Western Buffalo Bream
(*Kyphosus cornelii*), Silver Drummer
(*Kyphosus sydneyanus*).

Threats:

- Human activity (inappropriate boating and diving practices)
- Pollution.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Baler Shell is carnivorous (animal eating). It has a large muscular foot which it uses to smother its prey and then uses its muscular rasping tongue and jaws to eat it.