



FACTSHEET

Sea Cucumber



Sea Cucumber



Common Name: Sea Cucumber

Scientific Name: *Holothurioidea*

Conservation Status: The waters around Rottnest Island are a designated Marine Reserve. Some parts of Rottnest's coral reefs and sea grass meadows are included in the Marine Sanctuary Zones shown in the Rottnest Island Marine Management Strategy (2007).

Habitat: Sandy floors, Coral reef

Body length: 1-30 cm

Description:

Sea cucumbers have a long cylinder-shaped body that looks like a cucumber and a thick, leathery skin. Its mouth is at one end of the body and the anus at the other. They blend in well with their typical brown, reef environment and this excellent form of camouflage makes them difficult to be seen.

Diet:

Plankton (small marine organisms), detritus (broken down remains of dead plants and animals).

In the wild:

Sea cucumbers are very slow moving animals. They lie either on the sea bottom, on the reef, in reef crevices, or burrow in the sand.

They move by using five double rows of tube feet on its body to crawl along. Most shallow water species are nocturnal feeders. This animal feeds by lengthening and shortening the ten to twenty tentacles (which are really modified tube feet) near its mouth. It uses them to catch food and sweep it into its mouth.

The expelled waste looks like a long sand coloured worm and can often be seen trailing behind the animal.





It is estimated that 50% of the sand grains found in the world's oceans have passed through a sea cucumber at some stage in its existence!

Threats:

- Pollution
- Human disturbance

DID YOU KNOW?

If handled roughly or attacked, sea cucumbers can eject (out of their anus) many strands of sticky white thread called tubules or, even their own body parts! The tubules will entangle and startle predators such as crabs, and body parts will distract their predator. After use the tubules and any body parts they have lost will regenerate.