

SEA CUCUMBER



Tubular Sea Cucumber
Photo by Meet the Sea

Curiosities

Sea cucumbers are a great example of why you shouldn't judge anything based on its appearance. Even though they look very simple, the tubular sea cucumber has an incredible trick that it's able to use when threatened.

In a process called 'evisceration', the tubular sea cucumber will eject its own internal organs if they feel threatened. This distracts its predators, and gives the sea cucumber time to escape. Even more amazingly, the sea cucumber can later grow its internal organs again, so there isn't a long-term impact on their ability to survive.

Environmental importance

As well as their role in keeping the waters clean, the tubular sea cucumber is often used as an indicator of environmental health, meaning it is very important in sustaining and understanding a clean marine ecosystem.

Scientific Name:

Holothuria tubulosa (tubular sea cucumber)

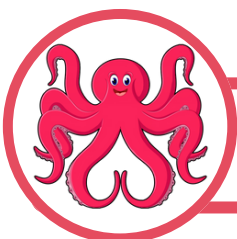
Key Information

Sea cucumbers are marine animals that can be found on the sea floor all over the world. The smallest species of sea cucumbers are around three millimetres long, and the largest can reach around three full metres. Most species range in size between 10cm and 30cm, and the tubular sea cucumber (pictured here) typically grows between 20cm and 45cm, making it slightly larger than average. Sea cucumbers can also be slightly different in shape depending on the species. They are all round, but some are much longer and more worm-like, whereas others are nearly spherical.

Food and behaviour

Sea cucumbers mostly eat what they can scavenge from the floor of the sea. This includes organic matter from decomposed plants and animals, but some species - like the tubular sea cucumber - also ingest sediment from the seabed. After extracting all the nutrients, they will expel the sand and rocks that offer no nutrition for them. This process essentially cleans out the sea floor, and is very important for maintaining healthy marine environments.

Sea cucumbers have small sticky 'tube feet' which allow them to move around while staying anchored to the seabed. Some types of sea cucumber can also fill themselves up with water and let the current carry them when they need to move more quickly.



Meet the Sea

Education & Entertainment at Sea