



ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

Touch Tank Quick Facts



- Size



- Location



- Diet

Use this guide as a reference for basic information and interesting facts about the animals in our touch tank.



Barber Pole

BANDED CORAL SHRIMP

Stenopus hispidus



- Reaches 6.2 cm in length
- Has 2 pairs of antennae that are longer than the body



- Western Atlantic from North Carolina to northern South America
- Also found in Indo-Pacific



- Eats parasites, damaged tissues, and unwanted food particles as it "cleans" cooperative species

Known as a "cleaning shrimp," these animals have a mutualistic relationship with animals that visit their "cleaning station," such as groupers, or grunts.



Hans Hillewaert

These urchins will use their tube feet to cover their bodies with shells and plant debris, which scientists believe provide shade and protection from bright light.

GREEN SEA URCHIN

Lytechinus variegatus



- Reaches a total diameter of 110mm
- Test can reach a diameter of 85mm



- Throughout Atlantic from North Carolina to Brazil
- Usually found in water less than 50m deep



- Omnivorous but primarily eats sea grasses and algae



The length of the spines of this species varies with habitat. Individuals that live in high-energy areas (lots of water turbulence) have shorter spines than those living in low-energy areas.

SLATE PENCIL URCHIN

Eucidaris tribuloides



- Reaches a total diameter of 130mm
- Spines grow slowly- only 23mm a year



- Throughout Atlantic from North Carolina to Brazil
- Usually found in water less than 50m deep



- Omnivorous
- Diet includes algae, coral fragments, gastropods, sponges, and sea grass



Rob Foster

Sea cucumbers are known for their sedentary lifestyle. Their mouths are surrounded by a ring of retractile feeding tentacles they use to capture food as it passes by.

SEA CUCUMBER

Holothuria spp.



- Species in this genus come in a range of sizes. One large species in the Keys can reach 30-50 cm



- This genus of sea cucumber is found in coastal waters in tropical and temperate areas



- Suspension feeders
- Diet includes protozoans, nematodes, copepods, larvae, and microscopic detritus



FLORIDA CROWN CONCH

Melongena corona



- Can grow to be 200mm but most are much smaller



- Found throughout the Caribbean
- Northern boundary is St. Augustine



- Opportunistic predator and scavenger
- Often feed on bivalves and other gastropods

These conchs will extend long black siphons to draw in sea water for oxygen and to detect scents that will lead them to food.



Dawson

FLORIDA FIGHTING CONCH

Strombus alatus



- Generally reaches 65mm to 90mm
- Can reach 130mm



- Found throughout the Caribbean and southern portions of the eastern coast of Florida



- Primarily feeds on algae and detritus

Despite the name, this conch is a peaceful species that generally leaves other animals alone.



Veronidae

This snail lacks an operculum, or "door" for the opening of its shell. Its name is due to the markings on the shell looking vaguely like letters.

LETTERED OLIVE

Oliva sayana



- up to 65-70mm; largest can grow up to 90mm
- Larger and slimmer than other similar species in the area



- Throughout Caribbean
- Ranges from North Carolina to Brazil



- Primarily feeds on other snails and crustaceans
- May also scavenge for food/detritus



USFWS

Horseshoe crabs are not crabs at all. They are more closely related to spiders, scorpions, and ticks than to crabs or lobsters.

HORSESHOE CRAB

Limulus polyphemus



- Females are generally one third larger than males
- Females can reach 46-48cm in some parts of their range



- North America along the Atlantic and Gulf Coast
- Found from Mexico to Nova Scotia



- Omnivorous
- Diet includes clams, crustaceans, worms, and algae



OurMarineSpecies

Some sponge species are parasitic, boring into corals, oysters, and other animals. This process does not provide nutrients for the sponge—just space for more growth.

SPONGES



- Can grow to large sizes but consist mostly of holes.
- Have an internal skeleton of needle-like spicules



- Can be found in most marine environments
- Thrive in regions with low turbidity



- Filters plankton, bacteria, and other tiny particles by pumping water through a series of internal chambers and canals



SEA STARS



- Come in a range of sizes but most are between 12cm and 24cm



- Can be found in many marine environments
- Found in salt and brackish water



- Generally carnivorous
- Many species have the ability to pry open clams or oysters and insert stomach into prey

There are over 2,000 species of sea stars and most have 5 arms. Some species, however, have 10, 20, or even 40 arms.