



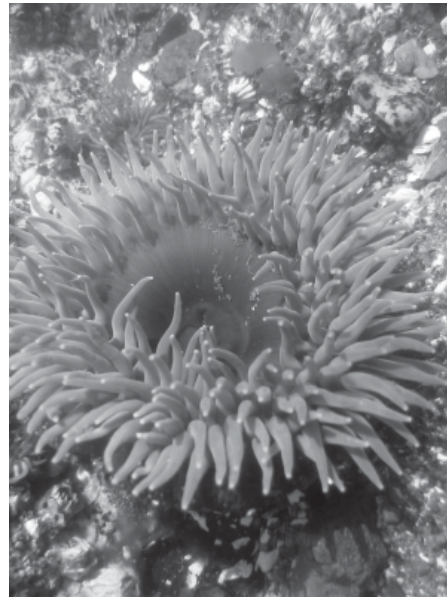
MOTTLED STAR

The mottled star is frequently mistaken for the ochre star, and is in fact appropriately nicknamed the “false ochre star.” The mottled star has a smaller disc than the ochre star, as well as narrower, longer arms. Colour is variable from rusty to brown or greyish orange.

Mottled sea star. Photo: Wendy Szaniszlo

SEA ANEMONE

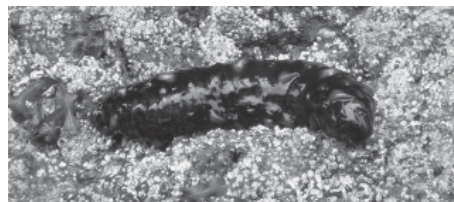
Sea anemones (“a-nem-a-nee”) look like strange flowers but are actually animals. They are crowned with a ring of fleshy tentacles. There are many species of anemones in BC. They feed by zapping and paralyzing small animals that brush against their tentacles, which are filled with stinging cells. Their stingers are not powerful enough to penetrate human skin. Anemones will close up if you touch them gently. The two most common types of anemones in the BGI are the giant green anemone and the aggregating anemone.



Sea anemone. Photo: JF Marleau

CALIFORNIA SEA CUCUMBER

The California sea cucumber looks like a 50-cm (20-in) long, red cucumber with soft, nipple-like projections. Sea cucumbers have a unique way of protecting themselves. If they sense a predator nearby the cucumber will eviscerate (spit out its digestive tract) to create a diversion while it escapes. This strategy is energetically costly however, because the animal must then regenerate its stomach. Main predators of the sea cucumber are sea stars and fish. Sea cucumbers are bottom feeders. This species is commercially harvested for its strips of muscle, which the Japanese consider a delicacy.



California sea cucumber. JF Marleau

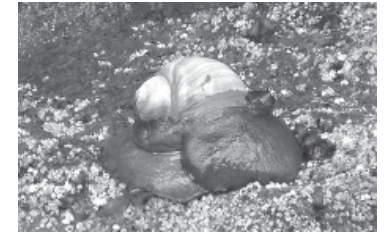


LEWIS’S MOONSNAIL

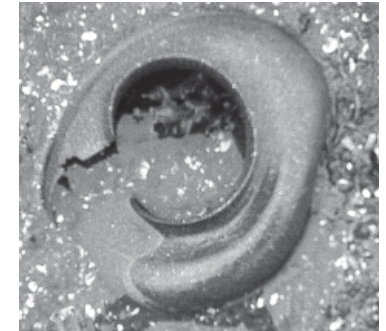
The moonsnail is a gigantic snail that lives on sandy and muddy bottoms in the low intertidal zone. The snail’s extended brown foot is as large as a dinner plate. The moonsnail is able to pull its entire foot into its 12-cm (4.7-in) wide, cream-coloured shell. The animal will suffocate if it stays inside its shell too long.

Moonsnails drill holes into clams with a special, drill-like tongue called a radula. They then excrete an enzyme into the shellfish which liquefies the animal. The moonsnail sucks up the liquid through a straw-like appendage. You may see moonsnail victims on the beach – shells with perfectly round holes near the hinge ligament.

Moonsnails lay eggs in unusual cases. The cases look like grey toilet plungers (without the handle) and have a hole in the top. These egg cases are a mix of eggs, sand and mucus and their shape is moulded by the curvature of the moonsnail’s shell. Eggs hatch from the collar in about 6 weeks.



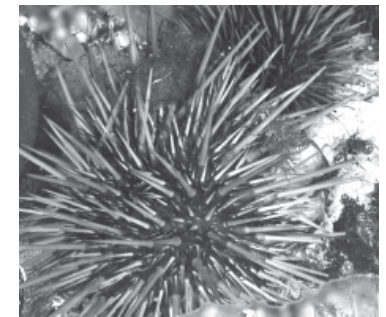
Moonsnail. Photo: JF Marleau



Moonsnail collar. JF Marleau

SEA URCHINS

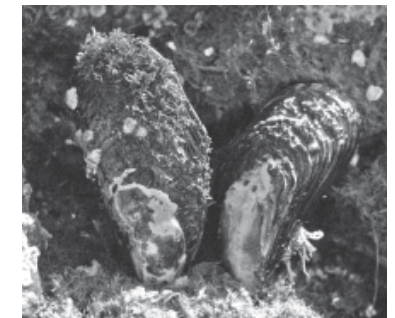
Sea urchins are related to sea stars, though they look more like brightly coloured, round pincushions than stars. Their spines help to deter predators. Sea urchins feed on algae and kelp. They chew their food with a unique, toothed jaw holding a set of teeth called an Aristotle’s lantern. Predators of urchins include sea stars, fish and sea otters. Sea urchin gonads are a delicacy in Japan.



Red sea urchins. B Schramm

MUSSELS

Two types of mussels are common in the BGI: blue mussels and California mussels. Blue mussels are blue, black or brown in colour and are up to 12.5 cm (5 in) in length. Blue mussels are an introduced species that grow in sheltered locations. California mussels grow to a size of 25 cm (10 in), and



Blue mussels. W. Szaniszlo