

Beachcombing

Identification Chart

Beachcombing is a great way to get to know your local beach and find out what lives in our oceans. Take a look at this identification chart and see if you can match what you find washed ashore. Many species on the Great Southern Reef are endemic to the area, found nowhere else in the world.

Fibre ball



Tough parts from Posidonia seagrass leaves are rolled by the waves and washed ashore. They can be different shapes depending on how long they have been rolling around in waves and the slope of the beach.

Seagrass



A sea plant with flat, strappy leaves. You might see freshly washed up green leaves near the water, or dried brown leaves on the softer sand. Seagrass meadows are important habitats for baby sea creatures to stay safe.

Plants

Corkweed



This brown seaweed is found in calm waters near the edges of seagrass meadows. Their yellow-green warty bubbles help them float upright and can grow up to 2 metres long.

Sargassum



Brown seaweeds with flat leaf-like structures and round floats. These floats help them to reach more sunlight, helping them to grow. They are often found with tubeworms, bryozoans and red algae growing on the stems and blades.

Neptune's Necklace



A brown seaweed with strings of olive-brown hollow beads, which have a slimy layer to stop them drying out. They grow on rocks and can form thick mats around rock pools of the Great Southern Reef.

Sea Star



These creatures can have between 5 and 50 arms. They have many small tube feet underneath to help them move and stick to rocks. Strangely, they eat by pushing their stomach outside their body.

Sea Urchin



Urchins are related to sea stars. Their round shell is called a test and they have 5 teeth underneath for feeding. They are covered in many spines which sometimes help them to stay wedged in rocks during stormy waves.

Echinoderms

Golden Kelp



A type of brown seaweed that grows all throughout the rocky areas of the Great Southern Reef to create underwater forests. Kelps have a strong holdfast at their base that helps them cling to rocks and hard seafloor.

Sea Lettuce



A type of flat and wide green seaweed that is able to grow quickly, especially when there are a lot of nutrients in the water from stormwater drains. It is so thin you can hold it up to the light and see through it!

Red Seaweed



Red seaweeds are generally small and delicate and can grow the deepest in our oceans as it can still grow with only a little sunlight. They have different shapes and will often fade to pink as they dry on the shore.

Seaweeds

Ascidian



A type of sea squirt that can be one animal living alone, or a group of much smaller animals that live together in a jelly of all different colours. They are sessile animals, meaning they don't move around, and filter water through two siphons to feed on tiny food.

Bryozoan



Small invertebrate animals called zooids form large groups that make them large enough to be seen. They can have branching, feathery stems, stony lace work or may be a hard rocky substance covering seagrass leaves, seaweed fronds or jetty pylons.

Sea Sponge



Sponges can be all the colours of the rainbow under the sea, but lose their colour once washed ashore. They have no eyes, mouth or bones and can't move, but are still a kind of animal as eat other living things like small plankton for energy.

Crab



Crabs moult their old shells as they grow and must hide somewhere safe while they grow a new one. Some like sand crabs or blue swimmer crabs have paddles for back legs to swim.

Cuttlebone



A shell from the inside of a cuttlefish; an animal similar to octopus and squid. It has tiny air pockets, so the cuttle can pump water into the cuttlebone to help it sink or pump it out to float. They often have bite marks telling us who has eaten them.

Other Invertebrates