

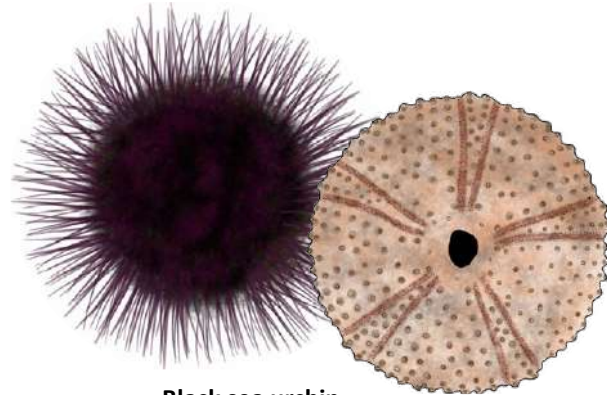
WITHOUT FEET OR HEAD: SPONGES, ANEMONES, SPIROGRAPHS AND MANY MORE



ANIMALS WITHOUT FEET OR HEADS

The seabed, unlike the earth and with the exception of the first few well-lit metres by the shore, is not covered with vegetation but rather with animal organisms that filter the water or trap the suspended particles.

They are invertebrates with surprising colours which at times don't even have a defined shape or have strange symmetries that are difficult to understand and interpret.

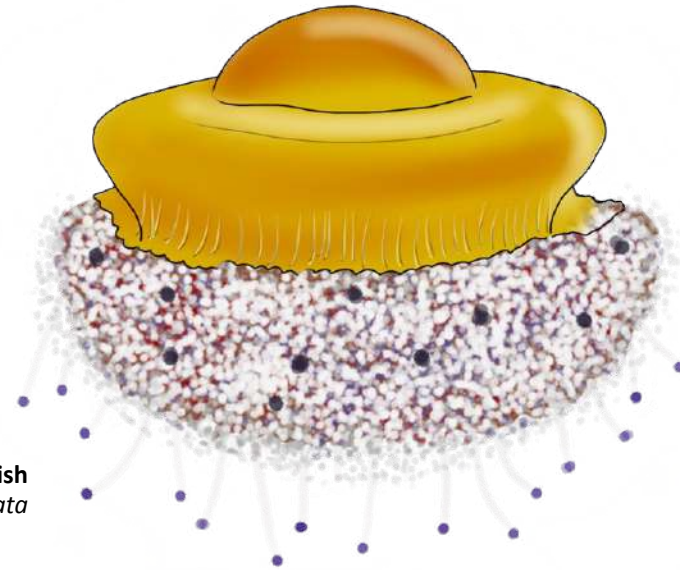


Black sea urchin
Arbacia lixula

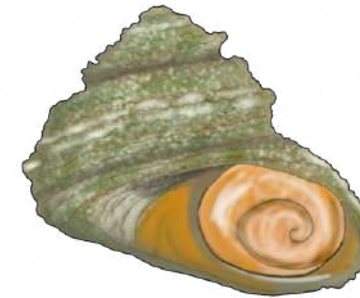


Sea cucumbers
Holothuria tubulosa

Fried egg jellyfish
Cotylorhiza tuberculata



Fan worm
Sabella spallanzanii



Rough starshell
Bolma rugosa

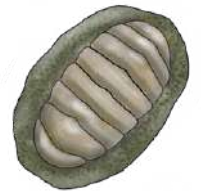


Rayed trough clam
Mactra corallina

Among the easiest to identify we highlight starfish and their relatives the sea cucumbers and urchins, or the capricious forms of the spirographs, sea worms in which we can see the branchial plume that enables them to breathe, coming out of the tube which protects them.

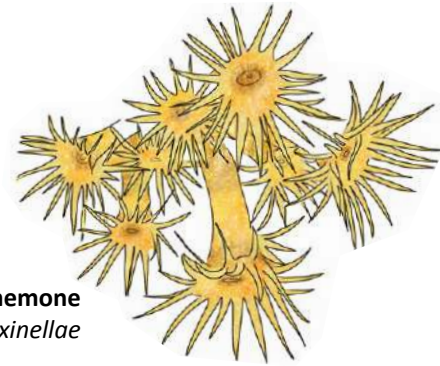
Encrusting anemones form colonies which cover the walls in a bright yellow tapestry and gorgonians and corals create their unique structures, but there are organisms which are more difficult to identify: the sponges, bryozoans, tunicates and others.

Chitons
Polyplacophora



WHAT'S WHAT

Encrusting anemones. These are very common on the Costa Brava, they consist of a multitude of coral or gorgonian-like individuals, measuring about two centimetres each and forming a bright yellow covering over the walls and ceilings. Using their small tentacles, they feed on the suspended particles in the water that come near their mouths.



Yellow encrusting anemone
Parazoanthus axinellae

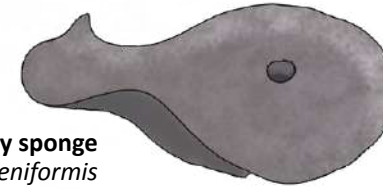


Red starfish
Echinaster sepositus

Starfish, sea urchins and sea cucumbers. Despite having radically different forms, all three are echinoderms and very common, with 5 well-differentiated symmetrical segments and the mouth in the middle.



Yellow cave sponge
Aplysina cavernicola

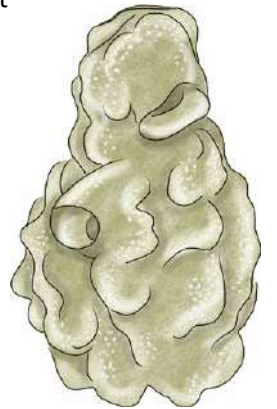


Kidney sponge
Chondrosia reniformis

Sponges live attached to the seabed and depending on the species they have very different shapes and colours. In some cases they form structures that can be easily identified, and in others they create a coloured covering over the rock with no defined shape. They are filtering animals, with a porous structure which the seawater passes through and where it retains the food it needs. Its classification is linked to the internal organisation of the structures through which the water circulates.

Tunicates get their name from the word “tunic”, as they form a kind of outer sac or tunic full of water which they filter to feed themselves. Like sponges, they live attached to the ground, but they differ in that they are not proper invertebrates, as in the larval state they have a structure that has ended up evolving into a vertebrate trunk.

There are many different species, there are colonial ones that are easily confused with sponges and there are those that live individually.



White sea-squirt
Phallusia mammillata

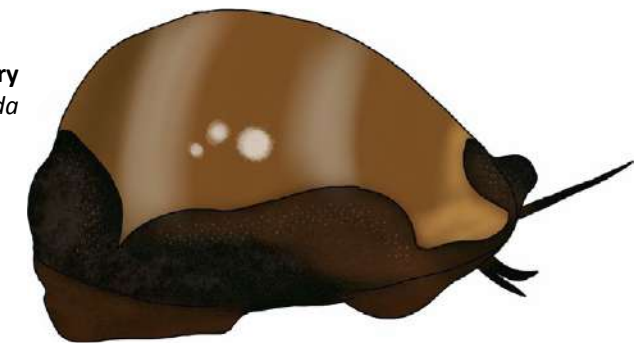


REPRODUCTION

Animals without feet and heads belong to very diverse groups and develop in a multitude of different places.

All of them have fascinating reproductive strategies: there are the starfish which multiply by dividing up their bodies, encrusting yellow anemones that make propagules of themselves that will recover the ceilings where they live, gorgonians that synchronise their spawning with the new moon of June to ensure fertilisation. These are very old species in terms of evolution, with very strange development strategies.

Brown cowry
Luria lurida



WHERE TO SEE THEM

Although we have commented particularly on the most common organisms found attached to the Costa Brava seabed, there are a lot more animals without feet or heads and can be found at all the depths, even in the area splashed by the waves, such as sea tomatoes or acorn barnacles.

However, in a shallow depth competition with algae it makes them more difficult to thrive and that is why they are more common in the shaded areas. A place where light no longer has enough intensity, we find the seabeds are totally dominated by such organisms, which base their nourishment on what they can filter from the water.

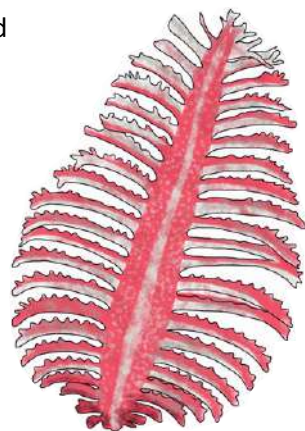
Therefore, they will be dark areas or moderately deep areas, where we will find the highest diversity of these animals without any feet or heads.

HOW TO SEE THEM

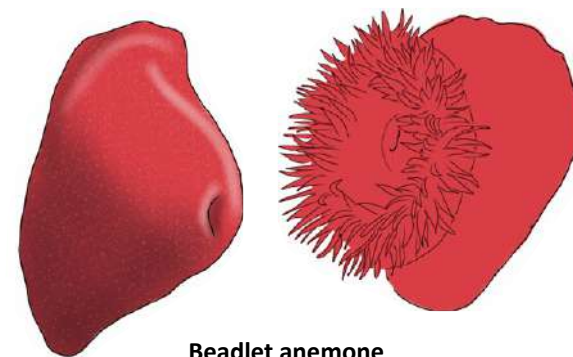
The best way to recognise these organisms is to have seen illustrations or images beforehand, but it could be that we have them before our eyes, but we are not able to identify them.

It is therefore advisable to consult marine species identification guidebooks to get used to what these peculiar forms of life look like.

If you are interested in this world of small, peculiar animals your guide can help you and take you to see all the species that we have mentioned, since they are stable and very common throughout the coast.



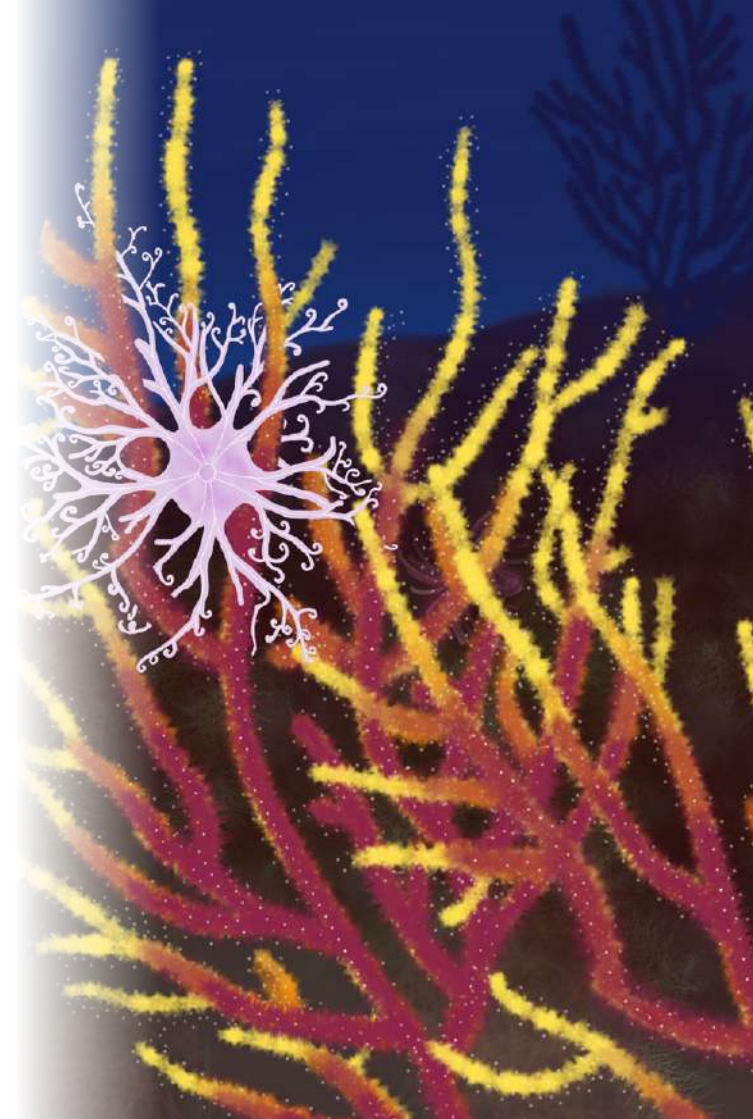
Red sea-pen
Pennatula rubra



Beadlet anemone
Actinia equina

PRECAUTIONS

Remember that these organisms mostly live on the seabed, it is important to control your buoyancy, to avoid kicking them with your fins and not cause harm to other animals or hold onto the rocks if it is not essential.





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