

# Weird and Wonderful Marine life

Reading Comprehension

Y5

Y6

Marine life consists of **plants, animals and other living organisms** that reside in the sea or the ocean. Marine life accounts for a hefty ninety-four percent of the Earth's living species! The World Register of Marine Species reports that there are 240,470 accepted species but this is believed to be only a small fraction of what really exists underwater as only 5% of ocean waters are thought to have been explored.

Here are five unusual and interesting sea creatures for you to enjoy!

**1. Anglerfish:** This angry looking fish lives in the deep, dark, depths of the ocean. There are more than 200 different species of anglerfish worldwide. Anglerfish are usually dark grey to dark brown in colour and have huge heads. Their most distinctive feature is the lamp hanging above their head. This lamp is actually a piece of dorsal spine which has a tip of luminous flesh called an esca. The glow that is emitted is created by bioluminescent bacteria that inhabit the esca. The purpose of the light is to lure prey close enough to be snatched into their huge, teeth-filled mouths. Anglerfish eat just about anything that they come into contact with including other fish, small turtles and squid.



Did you know? The jaws of an anglerfish are so large that it can eat prey larger than itself!

**2. Blobfish:** This fish does not have a full skeleton or muscles, instead its body is made from a jelly like substance which when out of water gives it this blob like appearance due to the damage caused by decompression. The blobfish can withstand immense sea



pressure where it lives at depths between 600-1200 metres, where the pressure can be 120 times greater than it is at sea level. When in its own habitat, blobfish actually appear more like a typical bony fish. Blobfish inhabit the deep waters off the coast of Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand.

**3.Sand striker:** This bristle worm buries most of its body into the ocean floor, leaving its wide-open mouth and five antennae exposed. When a fish brushes past the sensor-like antennae, the sand strikers mouth snaps shut with such speed and force that it can snap its prey in two. The mouth of a sand striker is filled with sharp teeth-like structures that can inject toxins that stun its prey. The sand striker can measure anywhere between 10cm and 3metres long. It mainly lives in the Atlantic Ocean but can also be found in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions too.



**4.Blue Whale:** The blue whale is a marine mammal that is not only the largest animal in the ocean, but on the whole of the Earth. Their tongues alone can weigh as much as one elephant! The blue whale can dive up to 500m to catch its food but it must come to the surface of the water for air. Blue whales eat krill (small crustaceans) and can eat as many as 40 million per day, they also eat plankton. The average lifespan of a blue whale is 80-90 years. Blue whales are classed as an endangered species and have been so since 1970. The species is threatened by boats, pollution, climate change and fishing.



Did you know? Other marine mammals include seals, polar bears, sea otters and dolphins.

**5. Flying Fish:** These fish are seen worldwide jumping out of the water and 'flying' distances of up to 200 metres to escape predators including mackerel, tuna and swordfish. There are at least 40 known species worldwide and can measure up to 45cms in length. Their torpedo shape helps them to gather enough speed to break the water's surface and their wing shaped pectoral fins help them to glide through the air. Flying fish feed on plankton- microscopic plants and animals that float along in the water.



Did you know? Barbados was known as The land of the flying fish due to the number of flying fish that inhabited the waters there.