CUTTLEFISH

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION

COMMON NAME:	cuttlefish
KINGDOM:	Animalia
PHYLUM:	Mollusca
CLASS:	Cephalopoda
SUBCLASS:	Coleoidea
ORDER(S):	Sepioida
FAMILY:	
GENUS SPECIES:	At least 100 species

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FAST FACTS

DESCRIPTION:	Cuttlefishes have a short, broad, and flattened body with lateral fins. They have a calcareous internal shell buried under the mantle. The shell gives the mantle support and controls buoyancy. Cuttlefishes have eight short arms and two longer feeding tentacles.
SIZE:	15 mm (0.59 in.) to 1 m (3.28 ft.)
LOCOMOTION:	Cuttlefishes are generally slow-swimming. They use their fins for stabilization, steering, and propulsion. For faster swimming, they use water-powered jet propulsion—in which water is expelled from the mantle cavity. A cuttlefish can control the amounts of fluid and gas in its shell chambers to actively regulate their buoyancy.
DIET:	Benthic invertebrates and fishes
FEEDING:	The two longer tentacles are used to capture prey and bring it to the mouth. When not feeding, the tentacles retract into a pouch. The other eight arms help in holding the prey. Cuttlefishes also have a pair of beak like jaws used for biting and tearing, and a

	radula to aid in swallowing. They posses a pair of poison glands to paralyze prey for easier consumption. Cuttlefishes swim over the bottom in search of prey or lie in wait for passing prey.
REPRODUCTION:	Cuttlefishes are either male or female. Fertilization is internal. Males have a modified arm, called a hectocotylus, which is spoon-shaped and used to deposit sperm in the mantle cavity of the female. Eggs are deposited and attached to seaweed or other objects.
RESPIRATION:	Cuttlefishes have two gills that are used for gas exchange. Water circulation through the mantle provides oxygen for the gills.
LIFE SPAN:	Less than two years; Most cuttlefishes die shortly after a single spawning.
RANGE:	Mediterranean Sea, eastern Atlantic Ocean, South Africa, Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and Australia.
HABITAT:	Benthic in shallow depths, less than 200 m (656 ft.) deep.

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FUN FACTS

1. Light is an important mechanism in controlling cuttlefish buoyancy. During the daytime, a cuttlefish will lie buried in the substrate. At night, it becomes active, swimming and hunting for food. Buoyancy decreases when the animal is exposed to light, and increases in the dark, allowing the cuttlefish to move up and down the water column.

2. Cuttlefishes posses a large ink sac, with glands that secrete a brown or black fluid. When alarmed, the cuttlefish releases ink from the mantle cavity into the surrounding water, hopefully confusing predators.

3. The eyes of cuttlefishes are highly developed compared to other molluscs and very similar to those of fishes. Each eye has a lens which controls the amount of light entering the eye and can form images.

4. Cuttlefishes have chromatophores (color cells) covering their body which are responsible for their coloration. Chromatophores are controlled by the nervous system and hormones. The contraction and expansion of these cells creates changes in color.

   Cuttlefishes are often referred to as “chameleons of the sea” due to their incredible ability to instantly change the color and even the texture of their skin. The most spectacular color displays occur when they are stalking prey, courting, or fighting. They have the ability to flash colors or flicker displays.

5. Cuttlebones are sold commercially as a bill sharpener and a calcium source for birds.

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ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION

Primarily in Asia, there are large-scale commercial fisheries for many cuttlefish species.

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