

Giant Pacific Octopus

Scientific Name: *Enteroctopus dofleini*

Class: Cephalopoda

Order: Octopoda

Family: Octopodidae



This is the largest known species of octopus. The mantle length can be up to 23.5 inches, and the overall length from 9.8 to 16.4 feet. Weight can range from 60 pounds to 100 pounds. Normal coloration is reddish-brown. However, they can change color and alter the texture of their skin. Experts at camouflage, they can smooth out and be a uniform color when on rock and become bumpy and blotchy in seaweed. Between its arms are webs of skin they capture prey, hug it tightly, bite it, and then soften it up with digestive enzymes. The octopus has no bones, so it can squeeze itself into tiny places, sometimes only a few centimeters wide. The size of its beak, the only rigid part of the body, determines where it can fit.

Range

North Pacific

Habitat

Mainly in rocks and among stones

Gestation

Incubation: Up to three months

Litter

Clutch: 20 to 30 thousand

Behavior

They are not known to maintain a large territory. Once thought to be nocturnal, research now suggests that they are simply frequent nappers. They stay in their dens for regular rest times, then go out to hunt for food. They are solitary animals and interact with their own kind only to mate. They prefer to crawl along on the ocean floor, but when they need to move quickly, they suck water into their body and shoot it out through a special tube, thrusting themselves through the water. When threatened they shoot ink at their enemies. This ink can take on the shape of a decoy octopus as it spread out, confusing other animals. It also affects the enemy's sense of smell, enabling them to get away safely. Octopuses are considered the most intelligent of all the invertebrates. They can regenerate limbs that are lost to predators.

Reproduction

The female lays tens of thousands of eggs, like grains of rice on strings, suspended beneath a boulder or in a crevice. The female stands guard over these eggs, aerating them by moving water past them and grooming them with her tentacles, the ends of which are said to have antibacterial properties. During this time, she eats little or nothing, and generally dies when the eggs hatch. Newborn octopuses swim freely for several months, feeding on plankton before settling down.

Wild Diet

Crabs, gastropods and bivalves