

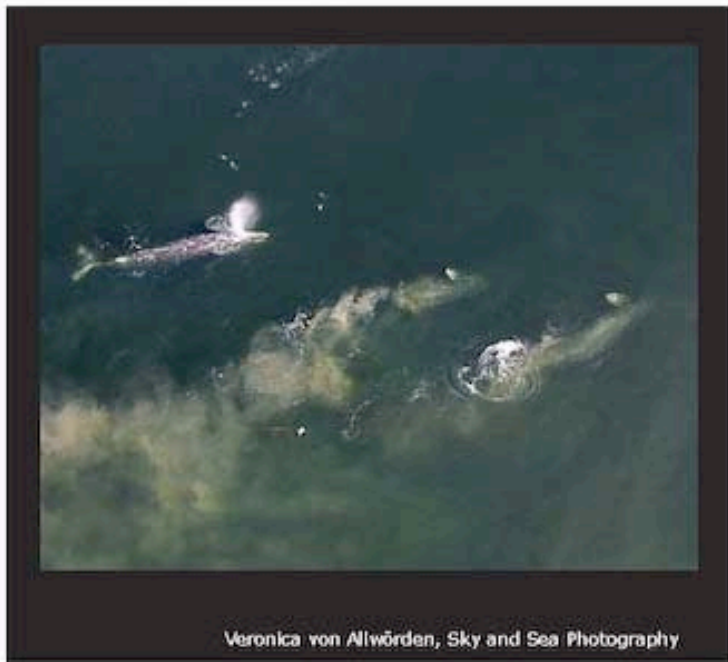
# CRITTERS, CREATURES, AND KELP

A Guide to Life in the Edmonds Underwater Park



Dan Clements

Grey Whale  
*Eschrichtius robustus*



Size: To 52 feet (16 meters)

Although not common in the Park, every year or two a grey whale swims through, frequently rolling on its right side to scoop up bottom sediment and snack on small shrimp and other bottom dwelling crustaceans.

Grey whales have the longest migration of any mammal: 12,500 miles from Alaska to Baja California.

These whales are renowned for their "fish" breath. When they exhale through their blowholes, beach watchers have been known to head for cover.

Red Irish Lord

*Hemilepidotus hemilepidotus*



Veronica von Allwörden, Sky and Sea Photography

Size: Up to 20.1 inches (51 centimeters)

These colorful fish rest on the bottom and are well camouflaged among the anemones, pink algae, and plants that surround them.

Red Irish Lords are classic ambush hunters. They wait until prey passes in close proximity and then "pounce." They enjoy dining on small crustaceans, molluscs, snails, worms, and smaller fish.

In order to help with their hunting, they have the ability to change color to match their surroundings.

Rock Sole

*Lepidopsetta bilineata*



Veronica von Allwörden, Sky and Sea Photography

Size: 23.6 inches (60 centimeters)

Rock sole prefer the Parks sandy, flat bottom areas. Unlike other flatfish they rarely bury themselves and infrequently lie flat. Instead, they sit on the bottom propped up by their fins.

These flatfish have a life expectancy up to 22 years, and are highly vulnerable because of commercial fishing. Their diet consists of fish, worms, molluscs, crustaceans, and brittle stars. Predators include larger fish and man.

Stubby Squid  
*Rossia pacifica*



Size: 4.3 inches (11 centimeters)

This nocturnal squid typically likes deeper water outside the Park boundary, and is therefore rarely seen. At night they may move into shallower water in search of food.

These small squid have a short life span of approximately 18 months. Shrimps, crabs, small fishes, and cephalopods are the major elements of this critter's diet. Divers enjoy seeing the stubby squid rise from the sand and release ink blobs during night dives.

Rose Star

*Crossaster papposus*



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Size: To 14 inches (34 centimeters)

This is a beautiful sea star, frequently showing concentric rings of bright red, orange, white, and yellow.

The rose star was studied extensively over a 17 year period, and it is known that these sea stars have life spans exceeding 20 years.

These highly mobile sea star have a diet primarily consisting of anemones, sea pens, urchins, and smaller sea stars.

Striped Star

*Solaster stimpsoni*



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Size: To 10 inches (25 centimeters)

This is the most common species of the many armed sunstar, and is sufficiently agile to form a ball by curling its arms over its body. It can use this form of locomotion to roll along the sea floor with currents.

The striped star is a carnivore, with sea cucumbers at the top of its menu list. These critters also include tunicates, sea pens, sea squirts and nudibranchs in their diet. Its primary predator is the sunflower sea star. Look for it on the jetty, rocky bottom areas, and other Park features.

Short Plumose Anemone  
*Metridium senile*



Size: To 4 inches High (10 centimeters)

These smaller versions of giant plumose anemone are commonly found in dense colonies where their color ranges from white, cream, brown, tan, and orange.

Reproduction is both sexual and asexual. In asexual development, when this anemone moves, small portions of the base are left, and these develop into another short plumose. Shaggy mouse nudibranchs and leather stars prey on these anemone. They feed on zooplankton, and pieces of fish and squid.



Nanaimo Nudibranch  
*Acanthodoris nanaimoensis*



Veronika von Allwörden, Sky and Sea Photography

Size: 1.5 inches (4 centimeters)

Nanaimo nudibranchs range in color from a beautiful translucent white pictured above to grey. They are not commonly seen in the Park, but prefer rocky areas and hard man-made features.

These critters have a short life span of approximately one year. This nudibranch species dines on compound tunicates like sea squirts and bryozoans, or creatures who construct calcium carbonate colonies. They are hermaphroditic, possessing both male and female reproductive organs.

Diamond Back Tritonia  
*Tritonia festiva*



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Size: To 4 inches (10 centimeters)

Diamond back tritonia are opportunistic predators who feed on the Park's soft coral and Sea Pen. They can be found on rocks, and sandy/muddy bottom areas.

This nudibranch has the ability of escaping predators like predatory sunflower stars by swimming off the bottom and away to safety. They live approximately one year, and like other nudibranchs have male and female reproductive organs.

Blue Branching Seaweed  
*Fauchea laciniata*



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Size: 6.2 inches (15.5 centimeters)

Blue branching seaweed is a red algae whose leaves appear a beautiful greenish yellow or violet blue. This is caused by light reflecting off of gland cells on the surface of the plant.

It is common throughout the Park, especially along or on rope trail guides.

As is the case with other plants in the Park, blue branching seaweed provides both food and shelter for many fish and marine invertebrates.