

# The Weird and Wonderful Octopus

Of all the strange and wonderful creatures that live in the ocean, one stands out above the rest. It is the amazing octopus. There are over 300 different types of octopus, and they can be found in every ocean in the world!

The octopus has a body unlike any other animal. Its body, called the mantle, is soft and shaped like a bag. The octopus can squeeze into very small spaces because it has no bones in its body. Its eight rubbery arms are attached to its head near its mouth. The octopus's arms are covered with suckers. These suckers help the octopus grab and taste things. The octopus can see very far distances, but it cannot hear anything at all.

The octopus's body is amazing on the inside, too. Along with its stomach and other organs, the octopus has three hearts. Two of its hearts send blood, which is light blue, to its organs for breathing, called gills, on two of its arms. The third heart sends blood to the rest of its body. When the octopus breathes in, water comes in through its gills and fills its body. When



the octopus breathes out, the water comes out of the tube called the siphon.

The amazing octopus has many ways to defend itself from predators. When an octopus wants to move quickly to escape a predator, it can shoot water out of its siphon and push itself backwards. This is called jet propulsion. Using this technique, octopuses can travel many miles. An octopus can also protect itself by squirting ink at a predator, causing it to become blind and lose its sense of smell temporarily. This makes it difficult for the predator to track the octopus once it has darted away. The octopus can also change

its colors like a chameleon to blend in to its surroundings. And if a predator manages to grab an octopus by the arm, the octopus has one more trick up its sleeve. It can break off its arm, swim away, and then grow a new one later.

The amazing octopus is also a predator. It hunts mainly at night. It has a varied diet, including snails, fish, turtles, small crustaceans, and even other octopuses. An octopus catches its prey by grabbing with its arms. To kill it, the octopus bites it with its tough beak and injects it with a poison that paralyzes it. Only one type of octopus, the Australian blue-ringed octopus, can kill a human with its poison.

The octopus isn't just amazing physically. It's smart, too. Scientists have taught octopuses to learn to distinguish between shapes and patterns. Some octopuses in tanks have been observed "playing" games. They throw objects into circular currents in the water and then catch them again. Research shows that octopuses may have emotions, too. Scientists believe that an octopus can change color depending on how it is feeling. An octopus is usually pale in color when it is relaxed. It becomes brightly colored when it is angry or scared.

Of all of the animals in the sea, on land, or in the air, none is quite like the octopus.

