

Common Cuttlefish

Scientific Name: *Sepia officinalis* **Irish Name:** Cudal coiteann



Common Cuttlefish live on sandy and muddy seabeds. In autumn and winter, they live offshore in waters about 100-200 metres deep. To breed, they move inshore to shallow waters in spring and summer. Common Cuttlefish can be found in European waters and in some waters around Africa. They have a lifespan of about 2 years.

The cuttlefish can change the colour and texture of its skin. Not only can it put on a pulsing display to attract a mate, but it means it is able to blend in, or camouflage, with its surroundings. It will do this to hide from predators such as fish, sharks, seals, dolphins and seabirds. Another means of defence is a ink sac, from which it can squirt ink in an attempt to reduce visibility and confuse attackers.

Cuttlefish are predators themselves and use their eight arms to grasp prey such as fish, crabs and shrimp, which it captures with its tentacles. They feed mostly at night.

Cuttlefish are very intelligent animals and have a very large brain in relation to their body size.



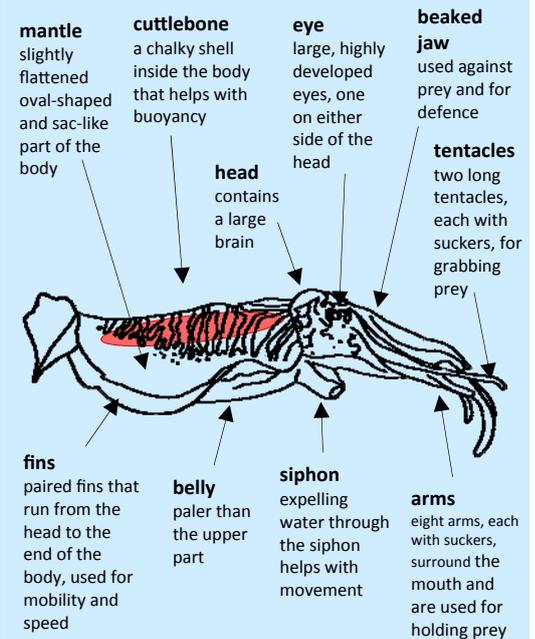
The Cuttlebone

It is likely that all you will ever see of a cuttlefish is its cuttlebone. This is an oval-shaped, chalky shell inside the cuttlefish's body. Hard, but brittle, it is full of tiny holes which the cuttlefish fills with liquid or gas, depending on whether it wants to float or sink. When the cuttlefish dies, the cuttlebone drifts in the sea and is sometimes washed up on the shoreline.

Cuttlebones are often given to pet birds as they are rich in calcium and good for grooming beaks. Cuttlebone is also used for carving and making moulds for jewellery making.

Head Foot!

The Cuttlefish is not fish, it is a cephalopod (sef-a-lo-pod). Cephalopod is a Greek word and translates as "head foot", describing how the head is directly attached to the arms. Cuttlefish are closely related to octopus and squid, which are also cephalopods. They all belong to the large group of invertebrate animals known as molluscs. There are about 100 species of cuttlefish around the world but the Common Cuttlefish is the largest in our waters.



FACT FILE

Length: Its mantle can be from 30-48 cm in length.

Colour: It can be black/brown, striped or mottled on top and pale underneath, though it can change its colour to match its surroundings.

Diet: Fish, crabs, shrimp, small fish

Habitat: Sandy or muddy seabed

Distribution: The Common Cuttlefish is found in European waters and some waters around Africa.