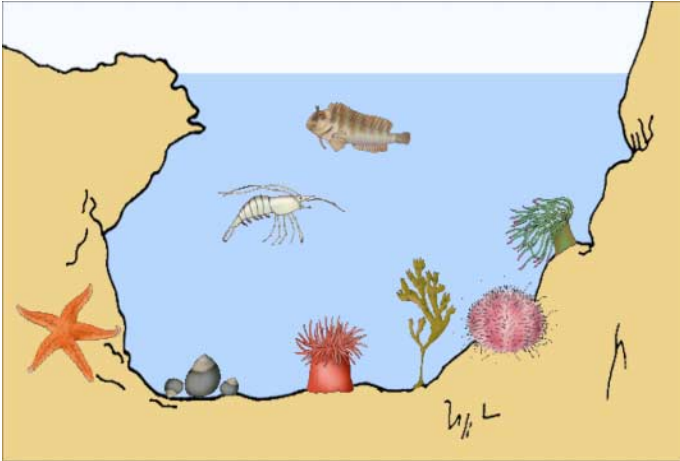


Rockpools



Illustrations: © Audrey Murphy

Pools are formed when the tide goes out and water is left behind in hollows in the rocks. Each one varies in size and many animals and seaweeds take advantage of this special habitat to prevent them drying out in the sun when the tide goes out.

Pools that are high up on the shore only refill with water on very high tides, called spring tides. Spending longer in the sun, these rockpools can be quite warm and the heat can also cause some water to evaporate leaving behind a very salty pool.

Rockpools can be stressful for animals as conditions can change quickly. A heavy rainfall, an overnight frost, a very hot day or a very rough day can influence what can survive in a pool. Less area to grow, less room to escape from predators, changes in the salt content, constant changes in temperature every time the pool fills up with cold water and then heating up again in the sun, all mean that many rockpools are not ideal habitats for animals and plants.

Some rockpools do however support a huge variety of animals and plants. Sea lettuce, crabs, hermit crabs, small fish, shrimp, anemones, starfish and sea urchins can all be found in pools. Some rockpools further down the shore provide a habitat for kelps, serrated wrack and other large seaweeds.

SOME ANIMALS AND PLANTS OFTEN FOUND IN ROCKPOOLS

When the tide is in, the limpet lifts up its shell and moves around, grazing on seaweed. When the tide goes out, the limpet attaches itself firmly onto the rock so that it will not dry out.



Edible Periwinkles can survive quite a while without food or water. Each periwinkle has an operculum, which is a round cover that blocks the opening to make sure the animal does not dry out.



Many seaweeds are strong enough to survive the often unpredictable conditions in a rockpool.

When the tide is out or if disturbed the anemone hides away its tentacles inside its body. This protects it from drying out and from predators.

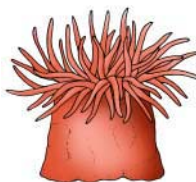


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