

The sea dragon is really a fish. It does not look like one, but it is.

Can you find the leafy sea dragon hiding in this picture?



SEA DRAGONS



ANIMALS IN DISGUISE

By Caitlind L. Alexander



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Sea dragons like to live in groups.

There can be a lot of sea dragons in the same area.

They do not fight with each other very often.

That might be because they do not have much to fight with! It is hard for them to move. They cannot swing their arms and legs very much. And they have no teeth to bite with.





The babies learn by watching older sea dragons.

But no one takes care of them. They have to learn how to live on their own.



SEA DRAGONS

A sea dragon looks like a sea plant with a nose. Their long nose is at the front of their head.

But that is the only part of them that looks like an animal.

Their body is round and lumpy. But they have arms and legs sticking out all over.

These arms and legs look like the dragon is covered with leaves or twigs.

Sea dragons like to hide in the sea plants.

The way they look helps them to hide.



Sea dragons come in many colors.
They can also change color.
A sea dragon that lives near brown plants will be brown.
Sea dragons that live near green plants are green.
Some sea dragons live near coral.
They are red and yellow like the coral. Some of them even have blue or purple stripes.

It takes about four weeks for a baby to hatch.
The babies are only a half inch long. That is the size of a fingernail!
When a baby is born, it floats around for a bit.
It tries to figure out which way is up. Then it twists and jerks until it gets right side up.
Then it finds some plants to live in.





Sea dragon fathers have babies. The mother lays her eggs on the father's tail!

His tail has small cups on it. The eggs stick to these cups.

They will stay there until the babies hatch.

The eggs are bright pink.

The smallest sea dragons are only an inch long.

The biggest ones are 18 inches long.

Sea dragons have bones on the outside of their body.

They have an eye on each side of their head.

The eyes do not work together.

They can look in two different ways at the same time.





Sea dragons swim by moving their bodies.

Some of them will buck up and down.

Sea dragons have fins, but it is hard to see them. The fins are on its back, at the top of the tail. But you can see right through them.

The fin is held up by bones. The sea dragon can move their fins very fast.

But they have small fins and a big body. It is hard for the tiny fins to push something that big.



Sea dragons like to eat baby shrimp, tiny sea animals and sea worms.

They will hide in a plant until the food swims by. Then a trap door opens on the end of their nose.

The sea dragon sucks in the food and swallows it.

A sea dragon has no teeth. It does not chew its food. It just swallows it whole.

Sea dragons have a tail. The tail can be as long as the rest of its whole body!

Most sea dragons have a long, thin tail. It has lots of spikes sticking off it.

They like to live with lots of plants. They spend a lot of time just hanging onto plants.

Sea dragons like to live in deep water.

They also like cold water.



Sea dragons also wave their leaves back and forth.

But they still cannot move very fast.

That is why they spend most of their time hiding.

There are two kinds of sea dragons.

The leafy sea dragon looks like it has leaves on it.





The weedy sea dragon looks like it has sticks or twigs.

The two kinds do not like each other.

They will stay in different parts of the sea.

Sea dragons are very stiff. It is hard for them to bend their bodies.

Mostly they just jerk up and down.

Most weedy sea dragons have two legs.

Leafy sea dragons have six legs.

Their legs are not like ours. Sea dragons cannot walk on them.

They can move them up and down to help them swim.

They also use their legs to help to steer in the water.

