

The Leafy Sea Dragon – Facts for Students

Australia has a wide variety of fascinating and unique fauna and our sea creatures are particularly interesting. Here is some interesting information about the beautiful leafy sea dragon.

The leafy sea dragon can be found in the waters along the coastline of South Australia and through to the south-western coastline of Western Australia. It is one of only two species of sea dragons found in Australian waters.

The leafy sea dragon can be identified by its brown to yellow body colour and olive-green, leaf-shaped appendages (fin-like attachments designed to camouflage them amongst seaweed and kelp). It has a long, thin snout, a pectoral fin on its neck, a dorsal fin on its back, and grows to a length of about 35 centimetres.

They live on kelp-covered rocky reefs, at a depth of between three and 50 metres, making them well-camouflaged from natural predators. Sadly, their numbers began to decline after they became popular amongst divers to keep as pets but, in the early 1990s, the Australian government put a protection order in place that prevents divers from removing them from the ocean.

Similar to sea horses, the male sea dragon is responsible for childbearing, carrying the eggs until they hatch. The female deposits the bright pink eggs on the underside of the male sea dragon's tail, where they are fertilised, and hatch about four to six weeks later.

Leafy sea dragons feed on tiny crustaceans such as shrimp-like mysids or sea lice, eating up to 1000 per day!

