

Life in the Ocean

The ocean is filled with many different kinds of animals.

In the Zone



NOAA

Killer whales breach, or jump out of the water.

An ocean is a large body of salt water. It can be divided into three zones, or layers. The deeper the water, the colder it gets. Why? Sunlight reaches only the water near the ocean's surface. Take a look in each zone to see some of the animals that live there.

Sunlit Zone (surface to 650 feet)

The top layer of the ocean is called the sunlit zone. It is lit by enough sunlight for plants to grow. All plants and most marine animals live in this zone. Whales live here because they need to swim to the surface to breathe air.

Some fish here have special shapes to protect them from predators. A predator is an animal that eats another animal for food. The porcupine fish puffs up and raises its spines when danger is near.

Twilight Zone (650 feet to 3,300 feet)

The ocean is colder in the twilight zone. Only dim light reaches this area. There is not enough light for plants to grow. Fewer sea creatures are found here than in the sunlit zone. Jellyfish and octopuses are often found here.



noaa.gov

Jellyfish

Many jellyfish have stinging tentacles that they use to defend themselves and to capture prey. Prey is an animal that is caught and eaten by a predator. Octopuses use the suction cups on their tentacles to hold on to

prey.

Midnight Zone (3,300 feet to 19,800 feet)

It is pitch-dark and very cold in the midnight zone. No plants grow here. Many of the animals have sharp teeth and big jaws. Other creatures, such as the ratfish, have large eyes to see in the dark. Ratfish swim along the bottom of the ocean and eat smaller sea animals, such as shrimp and sea stars.

Some animals, like the hatchetfish, have body parts that glow in the dark. That helps them to attract prey.