

## **Key Stage 1-2: Camouflage**

At Blue Reef we have a wide range of different animals in near natural conditions providing an ideal tool to deepen children's understanding of camouflage and its importance in the marine world. Below are a few examples of animals which would be covered during the tour.

### **Decorator Crab/Sponge Crab**

These crabs use material in their surrounding areas to cover themselves, allowing them to blend in with their environment and hide from predators. They are slow moving animals, so camouflage is particularly important as they are unlikely to "out run" their predators.

### **Counter shading**

Counter-shading is a colouration feature found on many fish. The children will see that the belly of a fish is light and the topside is dark. This simple but effective colouration reduces their visibility to potential predators when they are swimming.

### **Rays**

Rays are flattened cousins of sharks. They live on or close to the seabed in an often featureless environment. Their body shape allows them to lie flat on the seabed. Their skin is also similar to the colour of the seabed making them difficult for would-be predators to spot.

### **Weever Fish**

These shy but highly toxic fish lie almost entirely buried in the sandy seabed. They are also sandy-coloured and are almost impossible to spot with an untrained eye.

### **Octopus and Cuttlefish**

Octopus and cuttlefish truly are the masters of disguise. They can change their shape, texture, colour and pattern to match a huge range of different backgrounds and even imitate other living creatures!

### **Pipefish**

These close relatives of seahorses are ideally suited to life in their seagrass habitat. They are slow swimmers, with only their bony outer body plates to protect them against predation. See how well hidden these animals are in their natural environment.

### **Anchovies**

Silvery fish may appear an unlikely choice to demonstrate camouflage,

however they demonstrate shoaling behaviour which, like camouflage, is a form of disguise. Hundreds of these fish swim together in formation to resemble one larger animal which will hopefully deter potential predators from making an attack.

### **Why don't all animals use camouflage?**

We will explain why some animals use bright colours to their advantage. In nature, bright colours are often used as a warning colour. Toxic animals, such as lionfish, are brightly coloured to warn other fish of their danger. Potential predators are aware of this so do not attack them. Some fish, such as cleaner wrasse, provide a valuable service to many marine animals. Potential predators recognise their colours and will not attack them.