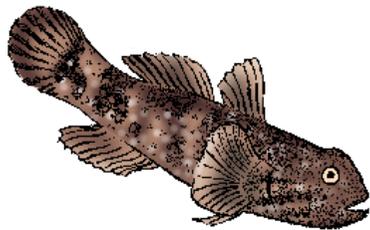


Sea Life of the Mar Menor

Last week I wrote about seahorses and pipefish, both of which are very hard to see. One animal you are sure to see if to take a look in the water is the goby. There are several types of goby commonly seen in the Mar Menor.

Gobies may be found in the shallows of the Mar Menor where there are rocks and crevices for them to hide in. They will bask on top of a rock or on the sand when they feel safe, but if they detect a predator or human approaching they will dart under a rock for safety. The exception to this is the Sand Goby who is well camouflaged against the sand. If they detect a predator they will stay completely still and hope to go unnoticed.

Gobies are quite distinct in their appearance. Their bodies are wedge shaped, being wider at the head and narrower at the tail. They have two dorsal fins (fins on their back) and have a rather grumpy



expression. This is particularly true of the Giant Goby featured below!

Giant Goby
Gobius cobitis
Max size: 27cm



Mottled grey, cream and black.

Giant Goby will hide under a rock, waiting for their prey to swim past. They are hard to spot because rarely come out.

Rock Goby
Gobius paganellus
Max size: 12cm



Mottled purple, brown and black.
Have a pale

yellow-orange band along the top edge of the first dorsal fin. Will normally sit out on top of a rock but will hide away if disturbed.

Sand Goby (Slender Goby)
Gobius geniporus
Max size: 16cm



Speckled colouring matches sand. These are the easiest goby to spot, as they sit out in the open most of the time.

Black Goby
Gobius niger
Max size: 17cm



Mottled grey-brown-black.

Juveniles and breeding males are totally black (hence their name). First dorsal fin is particularly long. Hide among stones and seaweed.

Gobies feed on algae, seaweed crustaceans, small fish, worms and molluscs. They live for between 5-10 years depending upon the species.

The best way to get a good look at these fish is to remain as still as possible. If you have scared them into their hiding places, you need to stay very still and they will soon come out again to check if the coast is clear. Never try and catch any sea creatures in a net or touch them with your hand. They have very delicate scales and fins that can easily be damaged. Once they are damaged they can become infected which can be fatal in the wild. So look but don't touch!

Lesley Singleton
AQUA ADICTA

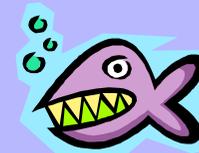
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