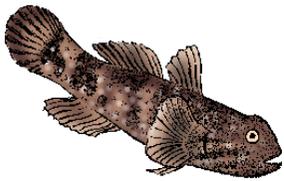


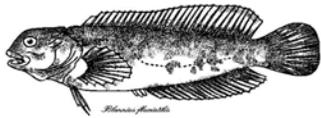
# Sea Life of the Mar Menor

I have been out snorkelling many times this year and have seen a number of different species of goby and blenny. On initial inspection goby and blenny look very similar, however, there are a number of key differences that will enable you to tell them apart.



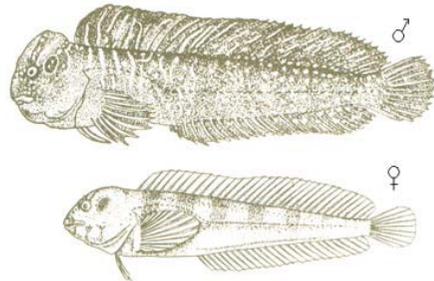
Gobies have two dorsal fins (along their back) whereas blennies have one continuous fin.

Gobies use their pectoral fins (on the side) to swim or move along the sand or a rock. Blennies will swim with a wriggling motion somewhat like an eel.



Gobies will often remain still if they detect a human approaching or will quickly hide in a rock crevice. Blennies are more inquisitive and if you approach them slowly they may even swim towards you so that you can have a good look at them (and them at you!).

There are actually 833 species of blenny, many of which are very hard to tell apart. The most common blenny to be found in the Mar Menor is the Peacock Blenny. Apparently they are quite a rare species but there just happen to be a large number in the Mar Menor.



You can see from the picture above that the male is significantly bigger than the female and has a very high forehead or crest. During the reproductive season



(May-July) the male takes on a yellow colour. In fact, the ones I have seen in the Mar are more striped in appearance than the one in the picture. They tend to have brown and yellow bands around their body. The dorsal and pectoral fins are also yellow in colour. The female and young are brown and cream. Both male and female have white stripes, dots and dashes on their bodies. These reflect the light from above and look very attractive.

**Salvaria pavo**  
*Peacock Blenny*  
Max size: 13cm



Blennies, although a fish, do not have scales, they have thick skin covered in mucus. In fact, their family name Blenny comes from the Greek word blennos, which means mucus!

Blennies eat small crustaceans, molluscs, algae and plankton. The exact diet will depend upon the species. The Peacock blenny is part of the family of Combtooth blennies. They are called this because their teeth are very fine like the teeth on a comb.

Blenny may be found all over the Mar Menor where there are rocks, algae and sea-grass for them to hide among. During breeding season the female will lay her eggs in a rock crevice which the male will then guard.

I have also seen a dark purple blenny in the Mar Menor. It was about 20 cm in length and was in the shallows just off Mar de Cristal. I haven't identified which species it is yet and with 833 to choose from it may take some time!

Lesley Singleton  
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