

Barnacles



Barnacles are often found in massive colonies clinging to a rocky shoreline. They also attach themselves to the undersides of boats, and have to be scraped off so they don't slow the boat down.

They also spend their lives cemented to crabs, shellfish, turtles, the hulls of boats, and on mangrove trunks and roots.

The shell of a barnacle looks like a miniature volcano and is made up of four, six or eight plates on a roughly circular base. Two pairs of shell plates act as the valves to open and close the hole on the top. When submerged in water, a barnacle feeds by opening its shell valves and extending six pairs of fringed limbs called cirri into the water to collect microscopic animals and organic matter. The cirri push the food into the barnacle's mouth.



Barnacles that live in tidal zones spend part of their lives exposed to air at low tide. They are also exposed to wave action, heat and the risk of drying out. In deep water, barnacles spend their entire lives under water.

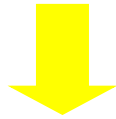
Each barnacle is both male and female (hermaphrodites), producing sperm and eggs. The barnacle uses its cirri to place its sperm into nearby barnacles. When the larvae hatch out of the eggs, they float away to find a solid place to attach themselves to.

Mulberry whelks prey upon barnacles. Using their rasp-like tongue along with the acid secreted by their salivary glands, mulberry whelks bore holes into barnacles. The soft body of the barnacle is then sucked out through the holes and eaten.



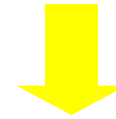
Mulberry whelk

Barnacles can be divided into two categories :



Stalk or Goose Barnacles

- mainly found on pieces of drift wood, wreckage, or other floating waste that have been drifting on the ocean currents and have washed up on our shores



Rock or Honeycomb Barnacles

- found on the rocky seashore between tide marks. There are several species. They can only feed when they are submerged, using six pairs of fringed limbs to collect microscopic organisms or organic matter.

Goose Barnacle

Lepas spp.



At first glance the goose barnacle looks like a pipi, but close examination shows a strong stalk attaching the animal to its home.

The shell is a light purple colour and the stalk is dark brown to black.

The goose barnacle is found in the open oceans, both as plankton and as attached adults.

It is said to feed standing on its head, kicking its food into its mouth with its feet.

The strong shell and tough stalk give protection from most predation.

Some species of goose barnacles are hermaphrodite (both sexes are contained in the body of one animal).

Fertilised eggs are released into the ocean to become part of the plankton.

Rose Barnacle

Tesseropora rosea



Found all around the Australian coastline, rose barnacles are found on rocky reefs and shores that are prone to strong wave action.

Growing up to 2 cm across, adults are pinkish with a white band around the top of the shell. Younger barnacles are white with a band of pink around the centre.

The Rose Barnacle is usually found on the rock platform that is only visible between mid-tide and low-tide.

To feed the barnacle lies on its back, holds up its head and kicks food into its mouth with its feet.

Unlike other crustaceans, the barnacles settle permanently on a rock surface after leaving the plankton stage. It eats both plant and animal plankton.

This barnacle is hermaphrodite.(self fertilizing) It spends the first part of its life as free-swimming plankton.