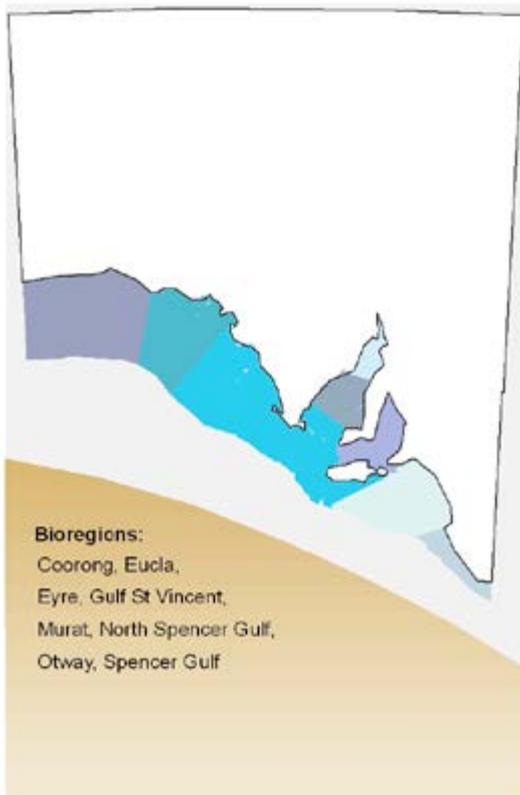
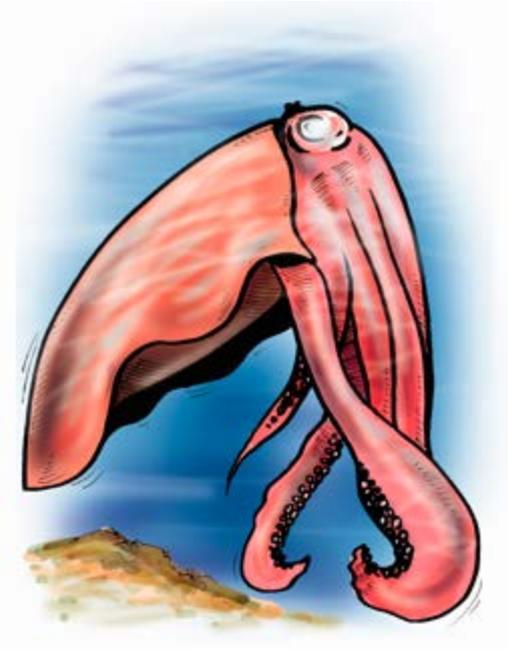


# Giant Cuttlefish

*Sepia apama*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

The Giant Cuttlefish is a cephalopod which is the same group name as for squid and octopus. Males can grow up to 60 cm long and weigh up to five kg. They have 10 tentacles; this includes eight regular ones and a pair of specialised hunting tentacles. The light, white cuttle-bone often found washed up on beaches is an internal structure used by cuttlefish to control buoyancy. They also have the ability to move backwards using jet propulsion. Giant cuttlefish live for one to two years and are usually solitary when they are not spawning.

## Diet

Giant cuttlefish mainly eat small fish and crustaceans. When hunting, special tentacles shoot out from sockets near the eyes and pull prey into their mouths. They use their strong beaks to crush mollusc and crustacean shells.

## Breeding

Giant Cuttlefish have the ability to alter their skin colour and texture for camouflage and, as a mating display. Spawning males are very cunning, using stealth, brilliant colour and light displays and deception to attract a mate. Small males sometimes disguise themselves as females to avoid competition with larger males, then sneak in and mate with the female closest to them!

The spawning of Giant Cuttlefish has become a significant eco-tourism attraction in South Australia. They gather at Black Point near Whyalla every winter to mate in great numbers. It is the largest gathering of cuttlefish known in the world and people travel a long way to see the spectacle.

## Habitat

Habitat requirements of the Giant Cuttlefish include hard, rocky surfaces with crevices onto which females attach their eggs.

## Threats

The last few years their numbers have dramatically dropped for reasons that are still unclear. A Government (across agencies) Cuttlefish Working Group is meeting regularly to determine research and management priorities.

Giant Cuttlefish are threatened by increased salinity levels which decrease the success of eggs hatching.

Disturbance by human activities is another potential threat. They are sometimes victims of bycatch from fishing and are vulnerable to pollution and general habitat degradation.



Giant Cuttlefish squirt a jet of black ink when threatened to confuse predators while they escape.

### Conservation

The government has now placed a seasonal ban on cephalopod catches in the Black Point area.

You can help the Giant Cuttlefish by:

- not polluting. Anything washed down a stormwater drain goes straight out to sea
- organising a day at the beach picking up litter with your friends and family
- visiting and appreciating Giant Cuttlefish in the wild with your family
- Reporting any sightings of these cuttlefish on Redmap (<http://www.redmap.org.au/>).



Photo by Vicki Billings

Giant Cuttlefish



Photo by David Muirhead

Giant Cuttlefish

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

