



GREEN MORAY EEL

GYMNOTHORAX PRASINUS

DID YOU KNOW?

We breathe and smell through our nose however fish and sharks just use theirs for smelling!

WHERE AT AQWA?

You can see this creature up close in the Far North

SIZE: <150CM

DIET: FISH, CRABS, OCTOPUS

MAIN PREDATOR: THEY HAVE FEW PREDATORS BUT CAN BE EATEN BY FISH, SHARKS

HABITAT: CRACKS AND CREVICES OF ROCKY REEFS

FOUND: TEMPERATE OCEANS AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND

GREEN FISH?

The body shape of an eel may resemble a sea snake, however eels are fish! They have a bony skeleton, gills and paired fins but unlike most fish they have no scales. Instead, they are covered in slime!

Green moray eels get their name from the colour of the slime that covers their skin. The colour can vary depending on their location and in WA the slime looks more brown than green.

Their scientific name 'prasinus' means leek green!

PACKED WITH TEETH

Green moray eels have low rounded teeth and a large mouth that extends well behind its eyes. It's teeth are inward pointing to snatch prey, and are not used to chew. They have another set of teeth in their throat which extend up and grab the still-live prey, making sure it can't swim back out!

You can get a good look at these teeth while a moray is breathing, as they constantly open and close their mouth to push water to the gills, just like a pump. This action gives them a fearsome appearance but remember they are just breathing!

IN, OUT AND AROUND

Moray eels move swiftly in and out of the crevices of a reef, their flattened body and slimy skin helping them slip through tiny holes. Their bodies allow them to swim backwards and they're known to twist their bodies into knots to crush prey!

Their long thin body lacks the side and pelvic fins that other fish have giving them their scientific name 'gymno' (bare) 'thorax' (chest).

SMELLING 'STRAWS'

The green moray eel is a nocturnal hunter, using its excellent sense of smell to find its food. Their nostrils (called nares) are widely spaced and shaped like tubes. As water passes through the tube they pick up scents - the longer the tube the greater the opportunity to pick up faint smells.