

Ocean Sunfish

The ocean sunfish has a great scientific name that's fun to say: *Mola mola*. It's funny looking, and resembles a fish head with a tail. Its body is tall and thin. It gets the name ocean sunfish because sometimes it lies flat on the surface of the ocean in order to be warmed by the sun. The mola can grow to weigh more than a ton, or 2,000 pounds! Can you guess what it eats? Its diet is mostly jellyfish, and the mola needs to eat a lot of them because it is so big. If there is floating plastic litter in the water, it may mistake the plastic for a jellyfish, and die from eating it. Molas can also eat squid, small fishes, and crustaceans. They don't have many natural predators, but sea lions, some whales and sharks will eat them if given the chance. In order to protect itself and try to hide, the mola can change its skin color to blend in with its surroundings.

Sunfish are usually found alone, but sometimes they can be seen in pairs or in large groups. The sunfish lives in every ocean of the world, and can spend a lot of its life submerged at more than 600 feet. They like warmer waters and if they spend too much time in cold waters, they could die. Sometimes the sunfish can be seen sunning itself at the surface. Scientists think this is the fish's way of warming up before it dives to the cold depths of the ocean.

In some parts of the world, like Japan, people eat all parts of the ocean sunfish, from the fins to the internal organs. Scientists don't really know what effect this is having on the sunfish populations.

