

Moray Eel

The Moray Eel is a long, skinny fish that can grow up to 13 feet in length, or twice as long as an adult person. One type of eel, the giant moray, can weigh more than you! The body of this fish looks almost like a snake. They are fish, but don't have pectoral and pelvic fins on the sides of their bodies like other fish do. Their dorsal fin extends from just behind the head and along the back and joins seamlessly with the caudal and anal fins. The green moray eel looks like a beautiful, long green ribbon when seen swimming in the open water. Sometimes they are called "painted eels" because certain species are very brightly colored. A species called the Green moray eel is actually blue, but has a slimy yellow coating on its body that makes the eel appear green. The slime protects the eel as it moves through rocky crevices.

Moray eels have tiny eyes, and can't see or hear very well, but their sense of smell is very good, and they use it to detect prey. They have large teeth for tearing the flesh of other animals that they eat, such as other fish or mollusks. An amazing fact about the morays is that they have a second set of jaws in their throat to help swallow their prey!

Where do moray eels live? They are found mostly in the warmer oceans of the world. Some burrow into the sediment, and others make their homes in between rocks, which make good hiding places. Although some people think moray eels are mean and like to attack human divers, the eels are very shy. They will only attack if someone is bothering them, or perhaps if a diver puts his hand into a moray's underwater home.

Moray eels don't usually swim around during the day time, but are nocturnal, meaning they come out at night to go about their business.

Moray eels sometimes have shrimp who hang around with them. The shrimp clean the moray's mouth, and are called "cleaner shrimp." It's the moray's way of going to the dentist!

