

Wild SIDE

GIANT PACIFIC OCTOPUS

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FOR COAST WEEKEND

At home in the temperate waters that rim the north Pacific

— from California all the way around to Japan — the giant Pacific octopus reigns contentedly over some of the darkest, quietest spaces in the sea. Shy and elusive, preferring its own company to that of all others, it is equally happy either lurking in the shadows of the rocky intertidal zone or tucked into a narrow crevasse more than a mile below the surface.

Crossword Answers

C	I	S	C	O	E	S	U	R	A	N	C	E	T	H	E	R	A	M		
U	S	T	E	N	S	H	A	W	N	E	E	S	M	A	D	A	M	E		
B	A	R	E	S	Q	U	E	R	Y	W	A	S	H	I	N	G	T	O	N	
I	D	I	P	E	S	T	O	S	S	E	O	G	A	P	E	D				
S	O	V	I	E	T	S	P	I	N	E	X	T	S	R	A	B	E			
T	R	E	N	C	H	Q	U	O	T	E	L	E	D	C	A	R				
S	A	N	G	U	P	T	O	B	A	B	Y	Q	U	A	K	E	S			
M	A	R	A	C	A	I	B	O	L	I	L	L	E	T	A	P	I	R		
A	P	A	T	H	Y	R	O	H	A	N	O	R	G	I	S	E				
H	E	R	E	S	L	O	O	K	I	N	G	A	T	Y	O	U	Q	U	I	D
A	R	E	A	V	A	P	E	S	C	I	T	R	U	S	T	Y				
L	Y	R	E	S	A	D	E	P	T	C	E	S	T	L	A	V	I	E		
Q	U	I	C	K	B	O	X	E	R	D	U	M	A	T	A	P	A			
U	S	S	E	N	P	E	A	C	H	Y	Q	U	E	E	N					
A	H	A	S	R	I	F	E	L	O	L	L	E	A	M	O	N	N			
H	E	I	N	E	O	U	T	T	A	A	E	O	N	L	A	O				
O	R	D	E	R	I	N	T	H	E	Q	U	A	R	T	T	W	I	N	Y	
G	I	S	E	L	E	O	N	E	U	N	D	E	R	A	P	A	C	E		
S	N	O	R	E	D	N	O	S	E	C	O	N	E	S	A	N	E	R		

The largest, longest-living octopus on Earth, this curious cephalopod can live up to five years in the wild, sometimes growing 18 feet in diameter and weighing up to 150 pounds. Generally reddish-brown in color, with a huge, bulbous head and two large, protruding eyes, this eight-armed giant can swim 25 mph and is a master at camouflage, capable of changing not only its color but also its bodily texture, allowing it to blend seamlessly with corals, rocks, plants and sand.

Highly specialized, each of *Enteroctopus dofleini's* arms is governed by an independent brain skillful enough to control the motion of all of its 200 suckers individually. Nourished by three hearts pumping blue, copper-based blood, these eight brains then report to a larger, more central brain which controls the overall nervous system. With each sucker capable of holding up to 35 pounds, this octopus is adept at prying open shells for food and can cling to nearly anything. Like sea stars, if an arm is severed from the body, it can be regenerated.

Stealthy and solitary, the Pacific octopus is a keen hunter, venturing from its protective den by night to gather and feast on shrimp, clams, lobster, fish and crab, using its beak-like mouth to tear and consume the flesh of its prey. Though unusual, it has also been known to attack animals that may linger at the edges of tide pools, like birds and small, unsuspecting mammals.

As is the case for all octopuses (not “octopi” or “octopods”), this one has a tragic sex life, mating only once before dying. Males expire first, soon after offering their sperm to a willing female who stores the fertile seed until she’s ready for the arduous work of motherhood.

Capable of laying up to 400,000 eggs, a female



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Giant Pacific octopus

octopus produces each one singly, then weaves them together in long, complicated strands that she tends diligently through incubation — a process lasting anywhere from two to 10 months. During this time, she focuses only on her brood, forsaking food and rest to fend off predators and mitigate against any natural mishaps. If all goes

according to plan, her eggs will hatch almost simultaneously, releasing nearly microscopic baby octopuses into the vast ocean where only 1 percent will ultimately survive. As soon as this happens, the mother octopus, starving and exhausted, begins to die.

Highly intelligent, the Pacific octopus is a grand escape artist, able

to squeeze its enormous body through any hole the size of a lemon or larger. In captivity, it has been known to mimic other octopuses, recognize the faces of its keepers, solve mazes and use tools to open latches and jars — a characteristic that places it in the smart company of dolphins, chimps, humans and crows. **CW**

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