

Sunflower Star Fish

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Sunflower Star Fish Latest News

Recently, scientists have found the culprit of a mysterious disease which started killing off sunflower starfish in droves — more than 5 billion are estimated to have died since 2013 is a bacterium called *Vibrio pectenicida*.

About Sunflower Star Fish

- The Sunflower Sea Star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*) is among the **largest and fastest sea stars** in the world.
- **Habitat:** It is commonly found on various **substrates like mud, sand, gravel, boulders and rock**. They are found from the intertidal **coastal waters** zone to 435 m, however, most are found no more than 120 m.
- **Distribution:** It lives along the vast majority of the **Pacific coast of North America**.

Features of Sunflower Sea Stars

- It has a radially **symmetrical body** and has more arms than any other species, numbering between 15 and 24 (most sea stars have between 5 and 14).

- **Reproduction:** There is no sexual dimorphism within these species. Fertilization is external. They **breed by broadcast fertilization** between March and July
- They have the **ability to regenerate its arms** which may detach as a means of defense when handled excessively or attacked by a predator.
- A whole new sea star may form if the detached arm has a portion of the central disk included.
- **Food Habits:** These species are primarily **carnivorous**, feeding on mussels, sea urchins, fish, crustaceans etc.
- **Ecological importance:** These **are opportunistic hunters** of a wide range of marine invertebrates, and in some areas are important predators that **regulate surrounding ecosystems**.
- As a predator of sea urchins, which graze kelp, the species **helps keep kelp forests healthy**.

Source: IE

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