

# Eleven-armed Sea Star

*Coscinasterias muricata*

The Eleven-armed Sea Star is one of the largest sea stars in Victoria and it lives in intertidal rocky shores as well as in deeper water crawling along the ground in search of food such as crabs, worms and mussels. The top surface is covered in small spines and the number of arms varies from seven to 14 with an average of 11 arms. Sea stars have a jelly-like stomach which extends out of their mouth, wraps around prey and is retracted once food has been digested. A sea star can escape being totally eaten by a predator by 'shedding' one of its limbs. It can then grow another limb and even divide into two new individuals.

Some people mistake Eleven-armed Sea Stars for the Northern Pacific Sea Star, or the damaging pest species 'Crown of Thorns'. However they are native to Port Phillip Bay and need our protection.

## Threats

Keep Australia Beautiful's National Litter Index for 2015/16 shows that 48% of litter on the ground is cigarette butts. They are easily washed into the ocean by storm water and have been found in the stomachs of marine creatures. Bottom feeders such as the Eleven-armed Sea Star may be especially affected.

