

Ocean Sunfish aka Mola Mola



What they look like: The ocean sunfish resembles a fish head without a tail. The main body is flattened, giving it a long oval shape when seen head-on. The pectoral fins are small and fan-shaped. However, the dorsal fin and the anal fin are lengthened, often making the fish as tall as it is long. The ocean sunfish has an average length of 5.9 feet but can grow up to 11 feet.

What they eat: Mostly Jellyfish. But they can also eat zooplankton, squid, crustaceans, smaller fishes, fish larvae, and eel grass. This diet is nutritionally poor, so the sunfish must eat a lot to maintain its size.

***A threat to ocean sunfish are floating plastic bags which look like their natural prey, jellyfish. Sunfish can choke as they try to swallow the bags, or slowly starve as the plastic clogs their stomach. You can help save these animals just by picking up plastic bags at the beach and making sure trash is disposed of properly.**

How they swim: Without a true tail the *Mola mola* relies on its long, thin dorsal and anal fins for propulsion, driving itself forward by moving these fins from side to side.

Interesting facts: The Mola Mola is the heaviest bony fish in the world, with an average weight of 2200 pounds. Some can weigh up to 5,000 pounds! Females of the species can produce more eggs than any other known vertebrate. They can lay up to 300 million eggs in their lifetime! The dorsal fin of a sunfish is sometimes mistaken for that of a shark, however, the sideways movement of the dorsal fin on the surface can be used to identify the sunfish. Sunfish have the shortest spinal cord of any fish—a seven-foot sunfish has a spinal cord less than one inch (2.5 cm) long. Its spinal cord is shorter than its brain.

Predators: Sea Lions and Orca Whales

Where they live: Tropical and temperate waters around the globe.