

Teachers Notes

- Can you see the mandarin fish? This tropical reef fish is brightly coloured (and small) to try and blend in with the bright colours of the coral, but the colours also do something else. They warn any predators that this fish is toxic! Bright colours in nature are often a warning sign of poison and help stop predators from eating those animals. The fox faced rabbitfish is another example of a dangerous beauty – it is a bright yellow and has venomous dorsal spines.
- Some fish, like species of Leatherjackets, mimic the colours of poisonous fish! This can trick predators into thinking that these non-poisonous creatures are in fact poisonous.
- In some species, like parrot fish, only the males are brightly coloured and the females are dull. In this instance colouration has nothing to do with predator avoidance or protection – in this instance the males simply want to look good for the females. Colour is not always associated with predators, as with this example colours are also important in mating and courtship.
- Marine animals can use colour and patterns to hide from and confuse predators, to hide from prey, to warn others that they are poisonous (or to pretend that they are!) or simply to look good! Ask staff at the rock pools to learn more about the ways animals use colour and patterns.