

This Month

Common Sand Dollar

Colloquial Nicknames: Sand Dollar
Scientific name: *Echinarachnius parma*

Field Markings: Circular with a maroon-colored velvet body. The shell has many small holes creating a petallike design
Size: grows up to about 2-4 inches
Habitat: Intertidal zone along sandy bottoms
Seasonal Appearance: Year-round

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES AND BEHAVIORS

The common sand dollar is circular with a maroon-colored velvet body. The shell has many small holes creating a petallike design, which is used to move water into its water-vascular system. Sand dollars can grow to about two to four inches in diameter.

Although they lack the five arms that most echinoderms possess, the sand dollar does have the five-part radial symmetry and is able to right itself if thrown on its back. Due to their small internal body and hard skeleton, they have very few predators.

The shell, or test, of the sand dollar has many small, brown spines that make it appear to be covered in velvet. These spines are not sued for protection but help the sand dollar to crawl or borrow.

It takes the common sand dollar about ten minutes to completely burrow into the sand, while other echinoderms take only a few minutes.

The spines of the sand dollar are also covered in small hairs and a slime coating, which, along with its tube feet, assist the animal in moving food to its mouth.

The mouth - found in the center of the sand dollar's underside



- has large, triangular teeth for feeding on algae and organic material.

Sand dollars are usually seen together in the intertidal zone where they burrow just under the sand. They can be found along the East coast from New Jersey north.

RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE

Sand dollar eggs are commonly used in mitosis studies to help people understand cancer and other diseases.

Often while walking along a beach after a storm, people will find the skeletons of sand dollars washed ashore



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