

The Leafy Sea Dragon (*Phycodurus Eques*)

By Ren D.

Welcome to the marine exhibit OLogy! We will be looking at a sea animal today, the leafy sea dragon. Don't be afraid, it's not a real dragon. But it has one thing that is very special to them, and that is their camouflage.

You will learn about:

1. What does a leafy sea dragon look like?
2. Where does it live?
3. How does camouflage help it survive?

Before you meet it, I want you to know what it looks like. The "DRAGON" is about 1 foot/30.48 centimeters in length. It has a tiny head with a slender pipe snout. Their tail is half of their total length! Leaf-like appendages (hence the name leafy sea dragon) are attached to it's torso, as well as it's head and tail. These appendages do not help them swim. The shallow water dragons tend to be yellow-brown or greenish with dark pink stripes and green-brown leaf-like arms.

Now, let's head over to see the magnificent creature... We're here! Okay, you may be wondering where it lives; in fact at first I didn't even know either! They don't live in aquariums (unless they are taken there) but they are naturally found in the Pacific and Indian Ocean. Often times they live in Southern and Eastern Australia; rock reefs are where they can live. The leafy sea dragon swims in the sunlight zone. They hide in seaweed, for protection from the predators.

Leafy sea dragons swim slowly and are delicate. They cannot fight off predators. As you might have seen BEFORE, they protect themselves using camouflage. It does that by changing the arms' colors to blend in with algae, seaweed, and seagrass. They can even sway like plants when there is a water current.

Sadly, we are coming to an end. In my opinion, sea dragons are cool, especially leafy sea dragons because of their amazing camouflage ability. This reminds me of a chameleon. I hope you enjoyed and gained more knowledge on these fascinating creatures!