



# *Care For Us*

Octopus

# Animal Welfare

A close-up photograph of a tiger skull resting on a dark, textured rock. The skull is the central focus, showing the eye sockets, nasal cavity, and the base of the jaw. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the bone and the surrounding rock.

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

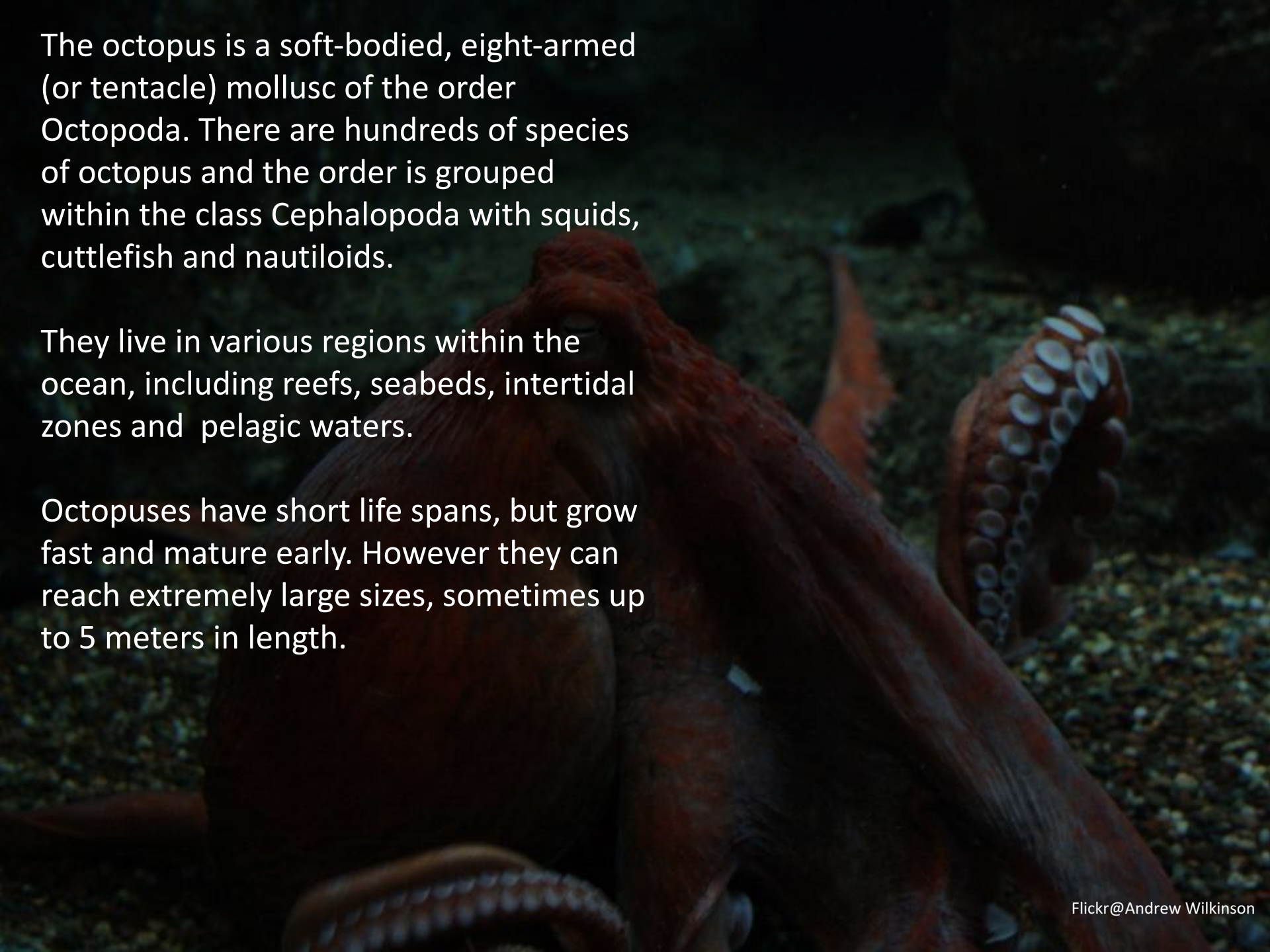
An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have positive welfare.

A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.



Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.



The octopus is a soft-bodied, eight-armed (or tentacle) mollusc of the order Octopoda. There are hundreds of species of octopus and the order is grouped within the class Cephalopoda with squids, cuttlefish and nautiloids.

They live in various regions within the ocean, including reefs, seabeds, intertidal zones and pelagic waters.

Octopuses have short life spans, but grow fast and mature early. However they can reach extremely large sizes, sometimes up to 5 meters in length.

# Octopus Like To Hide

An underwater scene featuring several fish swimming around a rocky seabed. The water is clear and blue, and the rocks are dark and textured. The fish are of various species, including some with stripes and others with solid colors. The overall atmosphere is calm and natural.

Octopus are typically solitary creatures making their own dens out of various detritus on the sea floor. Octopus are fantastic at squeezing into small places due to their soft bodies. Some octopus will create their own shelters in the wild. Octopuses are also very good at camouflage and can disguise themselves by changing the color and texture of their skin. This helps them hide from predators.

## Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing lots of hiding places for octopus is important, particularly if kept in a busy aquarium or tank. Rocks, sand, large shells, or artificial spaces such as jars or pipes are all interesting hiding places that can be used. Colourful aquariums that octopus can camouflage themselves in will also help. This will alleviate possible stress and multiple hiding spaces will encourage choice and exploration of the enclosure.

# Octopus are Intelligent

A close-up photograph of an octopus's tentacles, showing the intricate pattern of suckers. The tentacles are a mix of brown and purple hues, and the suckers are arranged in neat rows. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and green, suggesting an underwater environment.

Octopus are the most intelligent of the invertebrate family and demonstrate advanced cognitive abilities. They have both long and short term memories as well as learning systems for both visual and tactile information. Their need to hunt and capture their food may be one of the reasons behind the development of their intelligence. Tool use is well known in some species as well as cooperative hunting tactics. Some octopus have also demonstrated play behaviour

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Provide toys or objects that encourage manipulation and cognitive use. Children's plastic toys that are moveable and require exploration can be used. Balls, bottles or anything that occupies the octopus's interest through manipulation should be provided regularly, assessing when an octopus gets bored and so new items can be provided for additional stimulation. Octopus can have very individual personalities and will respond differently to different enrichment so always provide regular monitoring.

# Octopus Like A Varied Diet

Many species of octopus like a varied diet. They will eat crustaceans (shrimp, crabs) but also eat fish and some will use their beak to drill open shells such as mollusks. They will even eat other octopuses.

## Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide a varied diet and present the food in a manner that requires cognitive stimulation. Use items such as acrylic, see-through puzzle boxes with latches that must be undone to reach the treats placed in them. Octopus can also undo screws, so screw bottles or jars can also be used to hide food in.



# Octopus Like To Hunt

Octopus naturally hunt for their food, sometimes cooperatively. Most species will pounce on their prey although the Pacific striped octopus has been known to “trick” its prey by touching the far side of it with a stretched tentacle to encourage it to come closer to them. Octopus have also been observed coming out of the water in tidal pools to grab their prey.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Where possible, encourage the natural hunting behaviours in octopus. Hide food around the aquarium, feed at different times and put food in puzzle feeders, jars or bottles. Boomer balls filled with fish also encourages them to reach in with their tentacles and takes time for them to eat all their food.





# Octopus Are Sensitive But Strong

Octopus are sensitive to being touched, and are also incredibly strong relative to their size. Their hard beak can cause a lot of damage. They can also use their suckers to hold onto things with a strong grip.

## Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Keeper/octopus interactions can be positive if the handler is experienced in working with octopus and knows the individual's behaviour. Care should always be taken to avoid injury to either the keeper or octopus. Some octopus species are highly venomous and should not be handled. Using bubbles or gentle splashes of water can also provide positive stimulation and encourage them to engage in exploratory activities.

# Octopus Can Escape

Octopus move by jet propulsion, as well as by using their tentacles to crawl along the bottom. Possibly due to their inquisitive, exploratory nature and intelligence they are apt at escaping in captivity, using their tentacles, suckers and soft bodies to easily climb and squeeze out of small spaces.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Providing an interesting environment that encourages repetitive exploration may reduce an octopuses need to try and escape. Toys, complicated feeding strategies and positive keeper/octopus interactions will result in positive natural behaviours within the aquarium. Offer apparent opportunities to escape, like a putting a barrier across the home aquarium with top just protruding above the level of the water with differing environments on either side. The octopus could then choose which side it wants to be.



# Octopus Enjoy...

Cognitive challenges, food, toy manipulation and hiding. They are extremely intelligent and could get bored easily.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

