

The Pier Aquarium presents the Celebrity Critter of the Week!



Photo by Butch Ringelspaugh

Sea Whip

Scientific Name: *Halipteris californica*

Description: erect colony of marine animals; skeleton consists of a horny axis overlaid with small calcareous bodies.

Habitat: deep sea worldwide, tropical or subtropical shallow water marine communities.

Top 10 Facts:

1. Sea Whips are corals, marine animals of the phylum *Cnidaria*, with whiplike branches.
2. Branches vary in color from deep purple to yellowish-tan.
3. A single Sea Whip is actually a colony of many small animals that look like little anemones.
4. They catch food for the entire colony with their stinging tentacles. Whip corals are suspension feeders.
5. When disturbed, Sea Whips glow with a bright, bioluminescent light.
6. Sea Whips live on the sea floor between 350-4,600 feet.
7. Whip coral can grow to about three feet tall.
8. Each of the polyps covering the coral's skeleton has eight feathery, saw-toothed tentacles that periodically emerge to sweep plankton and tiny particles into the coral's body.
9. Unlike other similar species of coral, whip coral reproduces via external fertilization.
10. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck first described Whip Coral in 1815 and gave the coral its scientific name.