Giant clams and nudibranchs

Giant clams have a wide variety of colours, created by a contrast between algae inside the clam and the clam's natural pigment. This vibrancy is an indicator of clam health—if the clam is unhealthy, the dying algae will bleach it to a bright white. Giant clams, when healthy, can live up to 100 years. In previous centuries, giant clams were nicknamed 'man-eating' clams, due to the belief that they ate divers whole!

Giant clams are filter feeders, taking in plankton through a large, central opening. The clam's algae also produce metabolic waste products, which serve as a second nutritional source. This allows the clams to grow large even in nutrient-lacking waters.

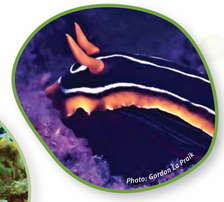
Left and below: Giant clams

Interesting facts about the nudibranch [nü-də-ˌbraŋk] which essentially means 'naked gills':

- They are marine snails that have no shell
- They are mostly smaller than 10 cm
- They are often colourful which acts as a defence
- Some have small poison glands used to deter inquisitive fish and other predators
- They are both male and female producing sperm and eggs
- They come together side-by-side to mate and both go away to lay millions of eggs
- They bury themselves in sand or hide during the day, coming out at night
- They are one of a few predators of the sponges

Food source for the different groups of nudibranchs are sponges, hydroids (plant-like organisms), bryozoans (aquatic invertebrates - animals that lack a vertebral column), other sea slugs or their eggs, members of their own species (cannibals), barnacles and anemones.

Learn more about giant clams



Brightly coloured nudibranchs