

A Field Guide to Sea Stars of the Pacific Northwest

By N. McDaniel. 2011. Harbour Publishing, PO Box 219, Madeira Park, BC V0N 2H0. Eight fold 9 inch by 36 inch plasticized sheet. 7.95 CAD.

Exploring Neil McDaniel's *A Field Guide to Sea Stars of the Pacific Northwest* is a little like exploring an intertidal pool. This durable, water resistant, 8-fold, field guide overwhelms and disorients the viewer with its wealth of information and images. This is a pamphlet for serendipitous browsing, not systematic use. Revel in the abundance of the species and the suggestiveness of the names. Even without the vibrant, accompanying photographs, names such as "Bat Star," "Fat Blood Star," "Dwarf Star," "Leather Star," "Slime Star," "Gunpowder Star," "Velcro Star," and "Cookie Star" are enough to enthral a child, or set a naturalist to dreaming.

On a practical level, the pamphlet contains a myriad of fascinating facts. As an avid kayaker, and someone who spent many childhood hours exploring the sea shore, I already knew about the tube feet, the pressure regulating madreporite, and the calcareous plates. However, information about sea star features such as the photosensitive "eyespot" and the forceps like pedicellariae, or minipincers, in all their variety, had escaped me. Similarly, though I have often watched glaucous-winged seagulls spend over half an hour choking down a sea star, I had never realized that sharks and Puget Sound king crab might also be predators. In the future, too, I will scrutinize sea stars for various parasites and for commensal scale worms.

McDaniel's attractive, colourful photographs are a big feature of this pamphlet. They—together with the concise, well-thought-out, descriptive notes about range, depth, prey, and identifying markings—should be a big help in identifying specimens. Another useful feature of the field guide is that it refers the user to other publications, including an online version of the guide and Dr. Chris Mah's fascinating www.echino.blog.blogspot.com.

My one serious complaint about this excellent production is that it is neither fish nor starfish, book nor pamphlet. Printed on a plastic laminate, it is presumably intended for scuba divers and for families exploring beach intertidal areas. Unfortunately, the foldout format allows only limited space. The glorious photographs are often too small and too cramped. The print size is too small for older eyes to read easily, particularly when white print is used on an orange background. Because of the crowding, linking images to image subtitles is also difficult at times. This publication really should have been allowed more space, really should have been a book, especially given the \$7.95 price.

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