

The Southern Rock Lobster, Abalone and Green-warrener Snail – Amazing creatures on and off the plate ... *Peter Crowcroft*

As we all know, this coastline abounds with an amazing variety of species. The following species have been an important source of food for indigenous people in the past, with shell fragments commonly seen in middens throughout this area. Both the Southern Rock Lobster and abalone species remain popular species for divers, with restrictions on time of year and number that can be taken. The majority of invertebrates are protected in the intertidal zone on the Victorian coastline including the Green-warrener.

Southern Rock Lobster – *Jasus edwardsii*

Also known as a crayfish, this is an impressively armoured and long-lived creature (20+years). Once the females reach sexual maturity after a number of years, they each release between 100,000 to 1,000,000 eggs per season. This species has a long larval stage, lasting between 9 and 24 months. Floating in the water column for this long ensures a wide-ranging dispersal. Like other decapods (crabs & prawns) this species will shed its hard exoskeleton when it is ready to grow, in a series of moults known as instars. These are frequent for juveniles, but may occur just once a year for adults. Some scuba divers recount stories of seeing crayfish as large as dogs, 10kg in weight and aggressive in defending their caves. Usually however a cray will dart rapidly backwards and out of reach of any potential threat. Despite their spiked carapace and 'horns', they are often the prey of sharks and octopus.



Southern Rock Lobster

Green-lip & Black-lip Abalone – *Haliotis rubra* & *H. laevis*

Abalone is perhaps best known as a gourmet seafood, prized in Asian cooking. The notorious black market for wild-caught abalone is a pressure on these species. To counter this, heavy fines are in place for breaching the strong restrictions on harvesting them.

Around the world, various species exist and are all highly sought after. Only Australia's and New Zealand's abalone fisheries have not collapsed under such demand and unsustainable harvesting practices. Generally found between 0-40m deep, these large molluscs (up to 23 cm in diameter) feed by scraping the algae off rocks with their radula (think rough tongue). In extremely rare circumstances, a pearl can form between the mantle and the shell. Their shell is thick and solid providing valuable defence, while their muscular 'foot' provides strong attachment to the rocks. As above they form an important part of the food chain for larger fish, sharks and octopus.



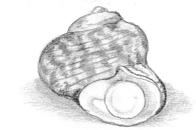
Green-lipped Abalone



Black-lipped Abalone

The Green-warrener Snail – *Turbo undulatus*

This is a very common sight in the rock pools along this coastline. The largest ones reach 5cm in height, and are voracious herbivores, eating the large seaweeds growing on the rock platforms. Their solid, white operculum is affectionately known as their 'trapdoor'. This serves to protect the snail from predators, and from desiccation when exposed out of the water. The flat and circular part of their shell survives for years against the erosive forces of time and often washes ashore in huge aggregations on the beach, each one having been grown by a single Green-warrener Snail once upon a time.



Warrener Snail

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