



# Creatures of the Deep

adapted by  
Paula Desmond

## Set Your Purpose

Once people thought nothing lived at the bottom of the ocean. Read the article to find out what scientists have discovered.

Scientists have only just begun to explore the fascinating world of the ocean depths. At one time, they thought no life existed at the bottom of the sea. They knew the dark and cold. Deep down, water pressures are enormous—measured in tons per square inch. However, about 100 years ago, scientists began dragging heavy nets to the sea floor. They found crabs, worms, and some strange-looking fish. More modern deep-sea submersibles—vehicles that can go to explore the ocean floor—have helped

scientists discover the surprising variety of life in this extreme environment.

## The Gloomy Depths

There is little light below 600 feet (183 m). Total darkness begins at about 1,000 feet (914 m). No plant life exists in the deep **trenches**. This is because no sunlight reaches these depths. Yet not only do creatures live in this dark world, they are present in unexpected numbers and varieties. Some swim to the surface waters to feed. Still others hunt for food in their immediate surroundings. The main food source for deep-sea life, however, is the constant rain of plant and animal remains that drift down from above.

## Glow-in-the-Dark Fish

Deep-sea creatures have **adapted** to survive the great water pressure and low temperatures of the depths. They have ways to find food in their dark world. Some fish have huge mouths to help them catch and eat anything that swims by. Some have elastic stomachs that stretch to hold whatever food they come across, even if it is larger than they are.

Many deep-sea animals glow in the dark! They have **luminous** organs on their bodies. The organs glow so the animals can attract their **prey**. These organs may also help fish identify each other and find mates. Deep-sea fish are dull in color—typically brown or black. However, their glowing organs can flash vivid colors.

## Mini-Monsters

While animals of the coral reef are very colorful, deep-sea creatures are not. What sets creatures of the deep apart is their odd appearance. Most are quite small in size—often just a few inches in length. But these mini-monsters can be **fearsome** to see.



Much remains to be learned about the deep sea. Scientists now know one thing, though. Here in the darkness, beneath tons of icy water, life thrives.

## Think About It

What have scientists discovered about life in the ocean depths?