

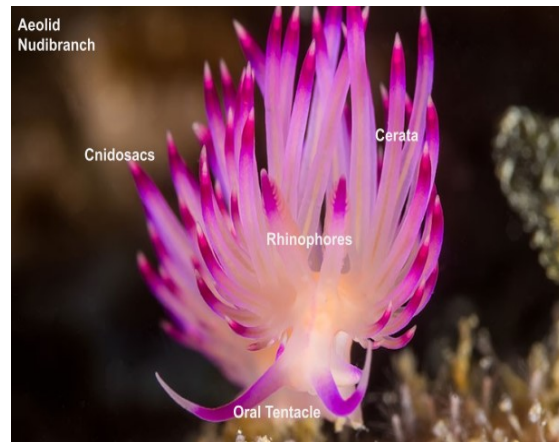
Gnarly Nudibranchs:

What are nudibranchs?

- Classified as gastropods, they are commonly referred to as sea slugs. They are related to snails but lack a shell.
- They are born with a shell but lose it as they transition to adulthood.
- They are split into two categories, dorids and aeolids.
- The key difference is that aeolids have specialized structures called cerata that the nudibranch uses to breathe, similar to gills.
- Nudibranchs' beautiful bright colorations serve as warnings to other marine life of their chemical defenses.
- Aeolid nudibranchs that feed on jellies, coral or anemones can store the nematocysts that they have eaten in their cerata and are able to expel them as a form of defense.
- They are able to store nematocysts because their mouth and throat are covered with a layer of a special protein that protects them from their prey's stinging cells.

Key Terms:

- The name **nudibranch** comes from ancient Greek and roughly translates into naked gills.
- **Nematocysts:** the stinging cells that are produced by animals in the cnidaria phylum
- **Cnidosacs:** found in the tips of the cerata and are where aeolids store the nematocysts that they have absorbed from their prey.
- **Mantle:** a special organ that covers the bulk of the nudibranch's body.



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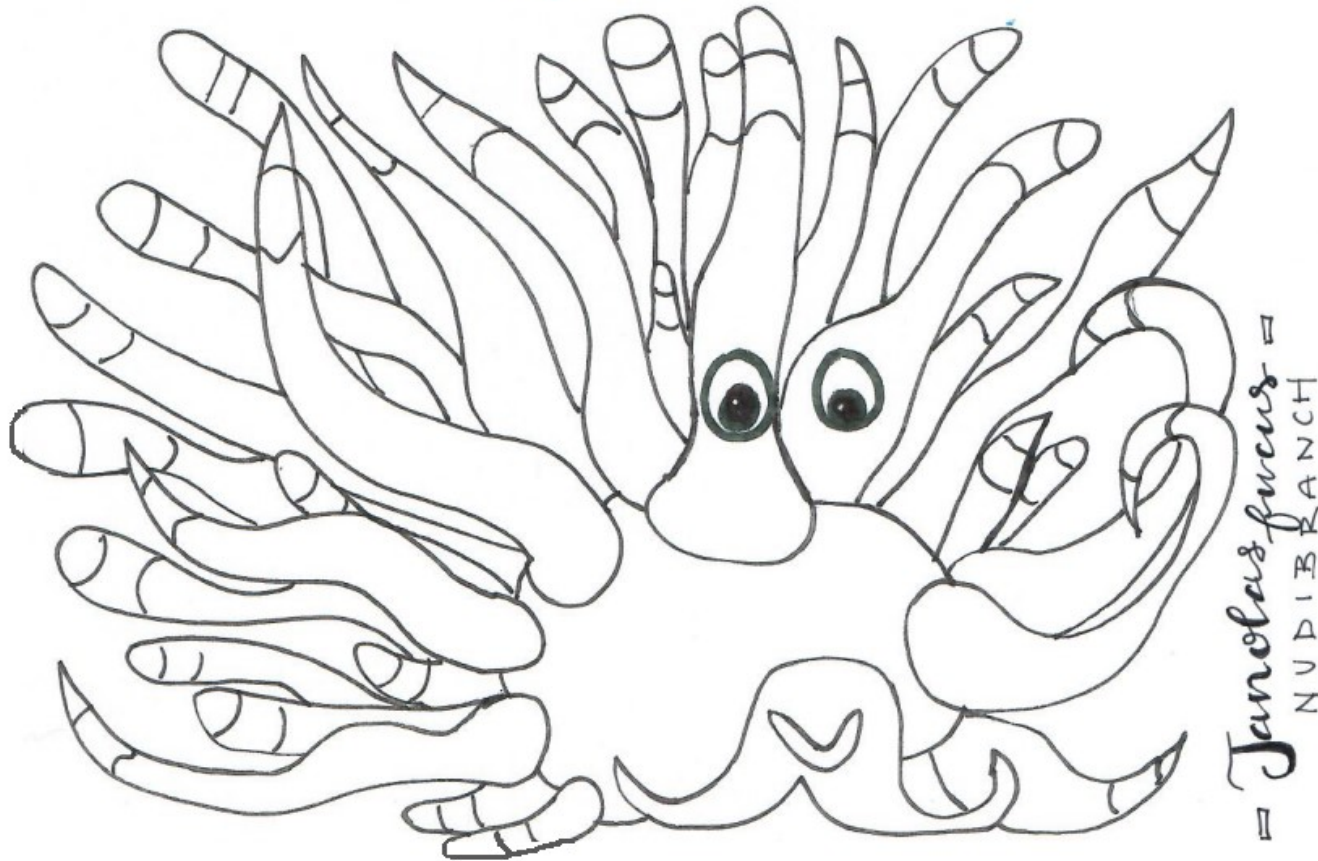


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