



## Octopus (Animal)

*Richard Schweid*

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The octopus is generally acknowledged to be the most intelligent invertebrate in the world: according to marine biologists the common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) has a mental capacity comparable with that of a dog. If you look at an octopus the octopus will look back at you, and actually think about and remember what it is seeing.

Octopus relates both what is known and unknown about the mind of an octopus, as well as detailing the animal's remarkable natural history. It is thought to have developed intelligence to compensate for the lack of a shell, rather like human beings. That's where the similarity ends, however – the octopus is short-lived, with a lifespan of two years at most, and it mates only once during its life.

A wily creature with an extremely sophisticated camouflage system, the octopus can change the color of its skin to blend in with its surroundings; should this fail it deploys clouds of ink to cover a hasty retreat. And there is no more adept escape artist than an octopus, which can squeeze its boneless body through seemingly impossibly tight openings – as many an unwary octopus keeper has discovered to their cost.

Octopus documents the long and multi-faceted relationship between human and cephalopod. It shows how, over the millennia, some people have considered octopuses as nothing more than a tasty meal, and how they are an important component of the modern global fish and seafood industry. Other cultures regard them as erotic totems, or symbols of the darkest evils. The octopus has always fascinated people, and this book will immerse readers in its amazing world.

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