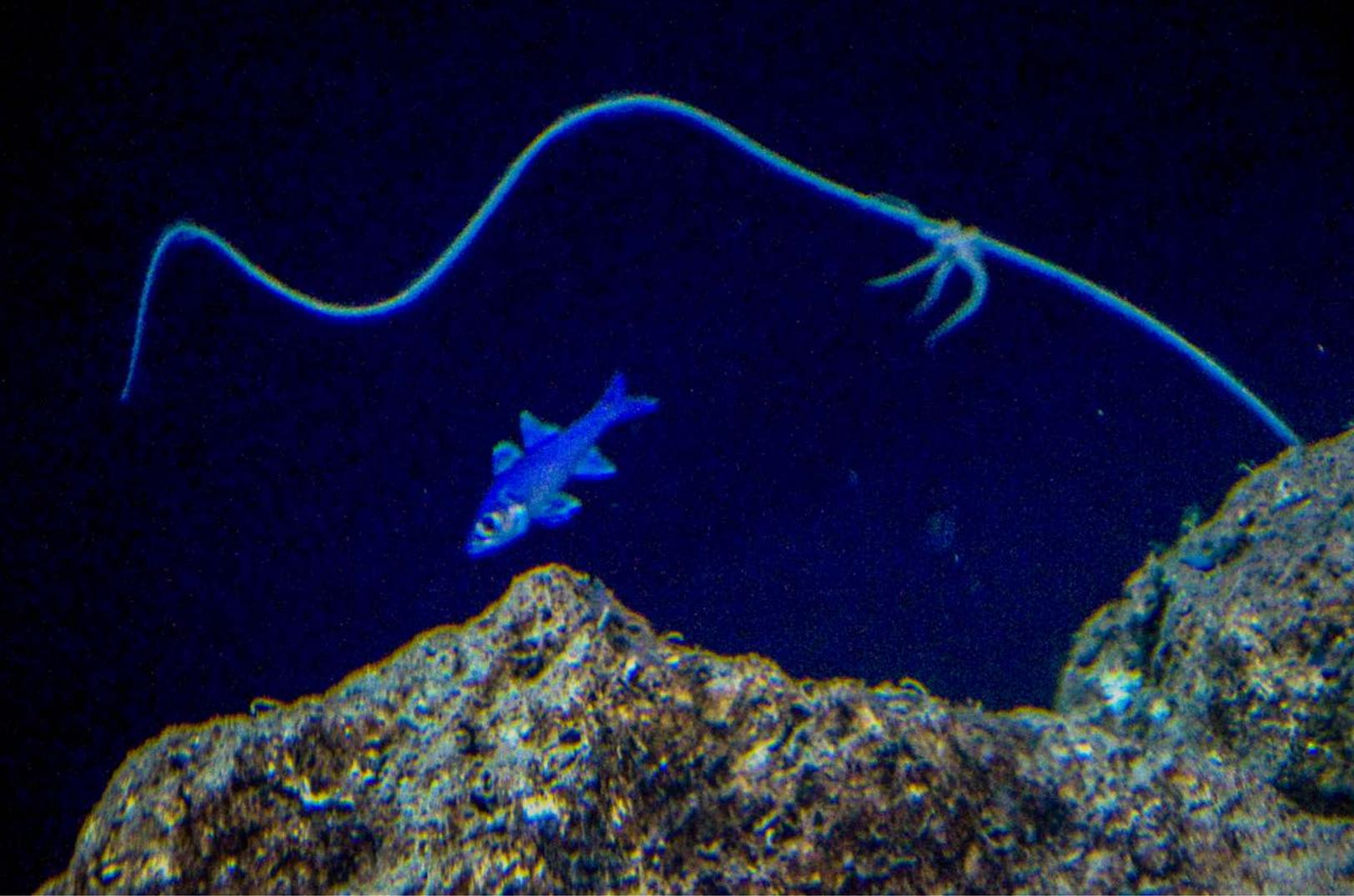


Deep Sea Creatures of the Caribbean





The deep sea is a very strange place. It is hard to even imagine. It's also hard to get to. You need to take a submarine to get there.

Everything in the deep sea is different than the things you might see when you are swimming or snorkeling at the beach. These special creatures live under the weight of the ocean. Many of them live so far down they never see sunlight.





You can see soft-bodied animals in the deep sea. On the left is a Jewel Squid. It has markings on its tentacles that look like jewels.

The Dumbo Octopus is usually seen swimming around, but the one in this picture is seen resting on the sea floor. This octopus squirts jets of water to move and it controls the direction it goes with its eight arms.



The Rattail Fish is also known as a Grenadier. It roams the deep sea looking for food, like shrimp and smaller fish. Rattail Fish fish lay thousands of eggs, and the eggs float up to where the deep ocean starts to meet the water near the surface. As the baby fish grow, they move to deeper and deeper water.



There are many kinds of deep sea crustaceans: lobsters, shrimp and crabs. Sometimes deep sea creatures are white. This is because they live so far down, no sunlight ever reaches them. In a world that is always dark, they don't need to have colors to help them blend in to their surroundings like animals in shallow seas.



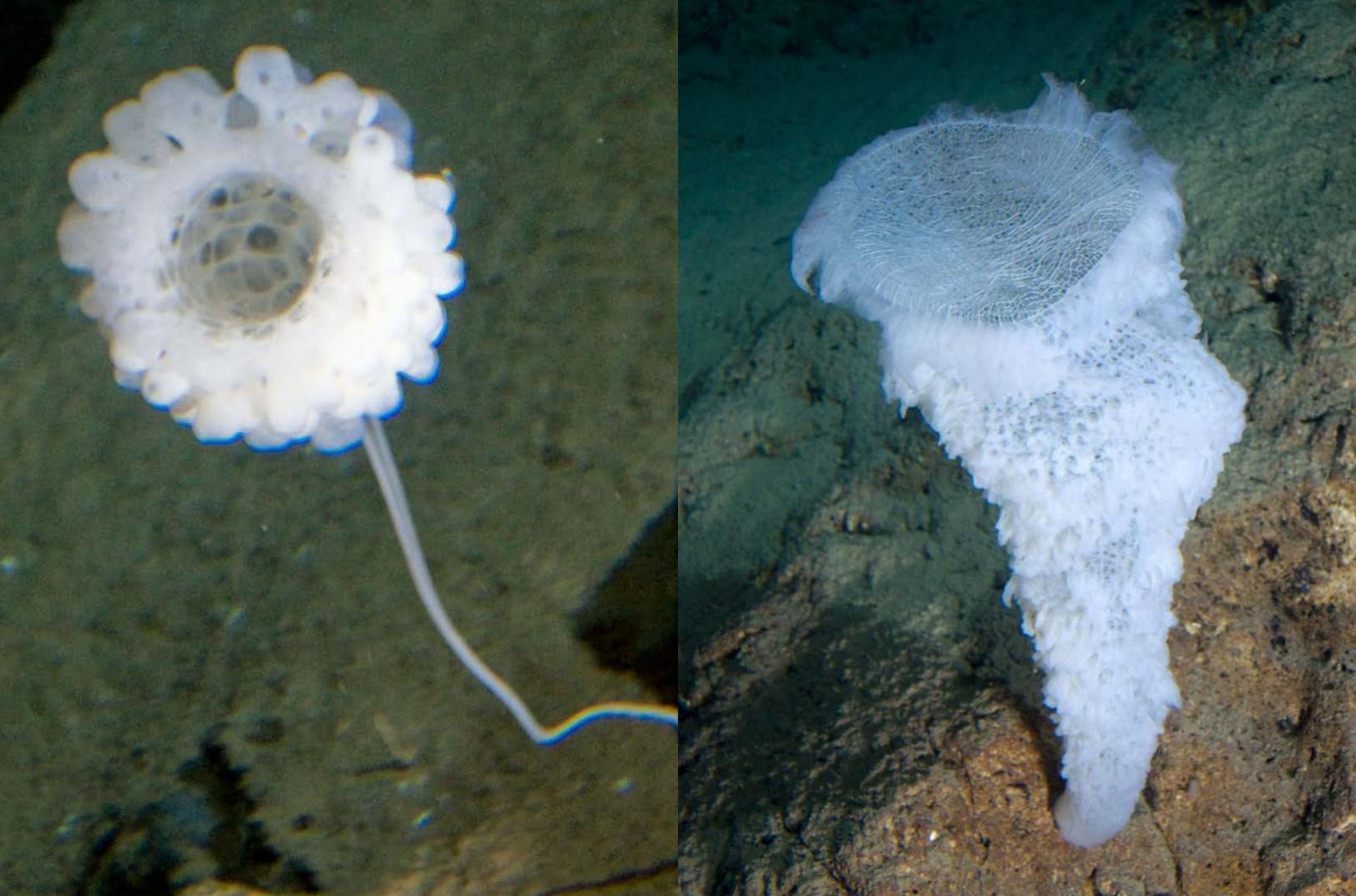
Sometimes deep sea creatures look totally different from their shallow water relatives. This Swimming Sea Cucumber has a see-through body and swims through the water.

In shallow water, sea cucumbers don't look like this at all. They are usually long and brown and lie on the sea floor. They sift tiny bits of food out of sand.



Brisingid Sea Stars are a special kind of sea star. They can have up to 18 legs. They attach themselves to deep sea rocks and filter tiny bits of food from the water.

Many deep sea creatures live on tiny bits of food falling down from the upper part of the ocean. Tiny animals and plants and other nutrients falling down to the deep ocean are called “marine snow” and they are a major source of food for deep sea animals.



Glass Sponges also eat tiny bits of food falling down through the ocean. They come in different shapes. They are called glass sponges because their skeletons are made of silica, which is what sand and glass are made of.

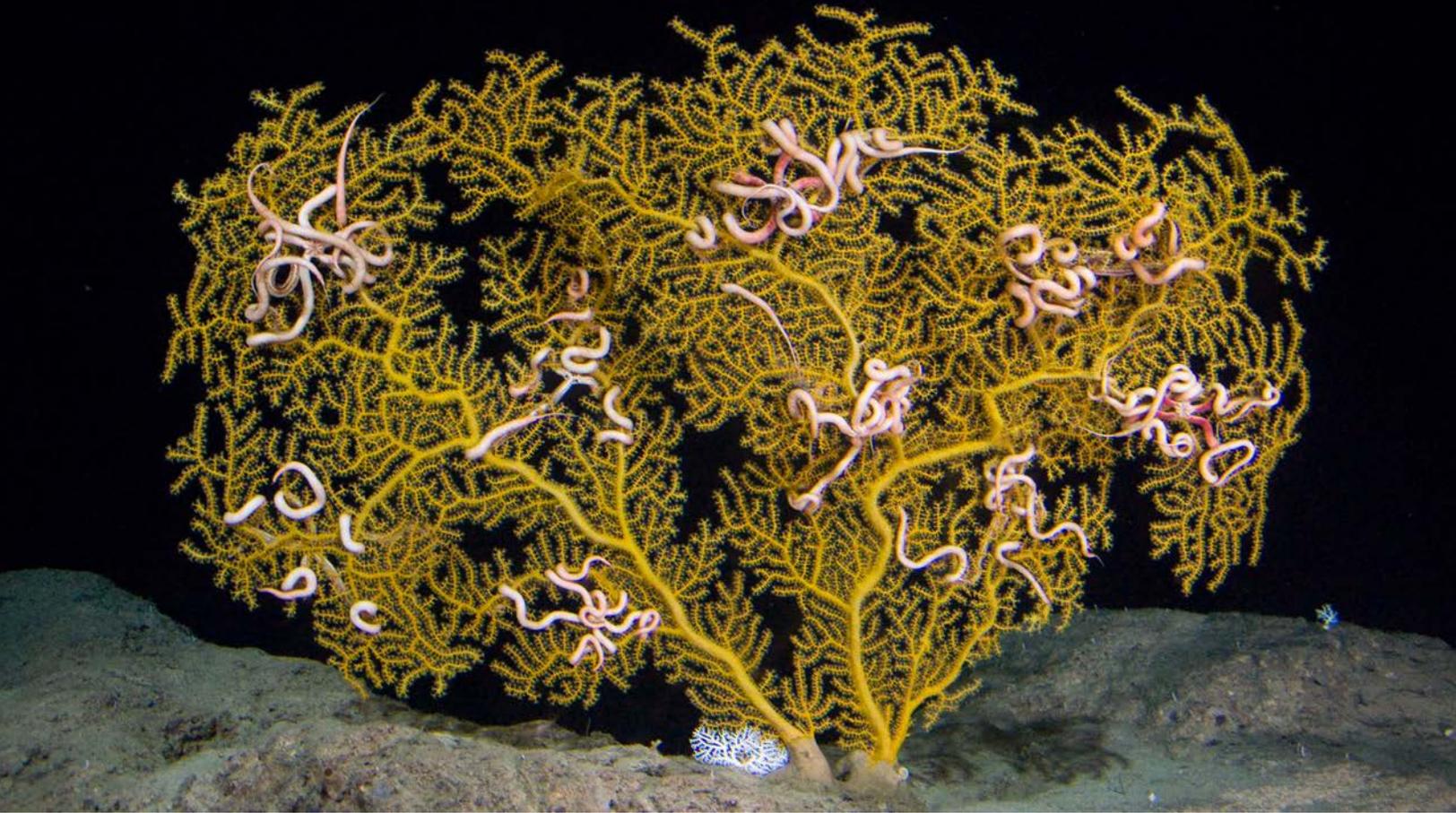


The Tripod Fish has three long fin tips and it uses them like the legs of a tripod when it sits on the ocean floor. The Tripod Fish doesn't see its food, but it can feel when something like a shrimp or little fish is approaching. It faces into the current so its food will drift to it.

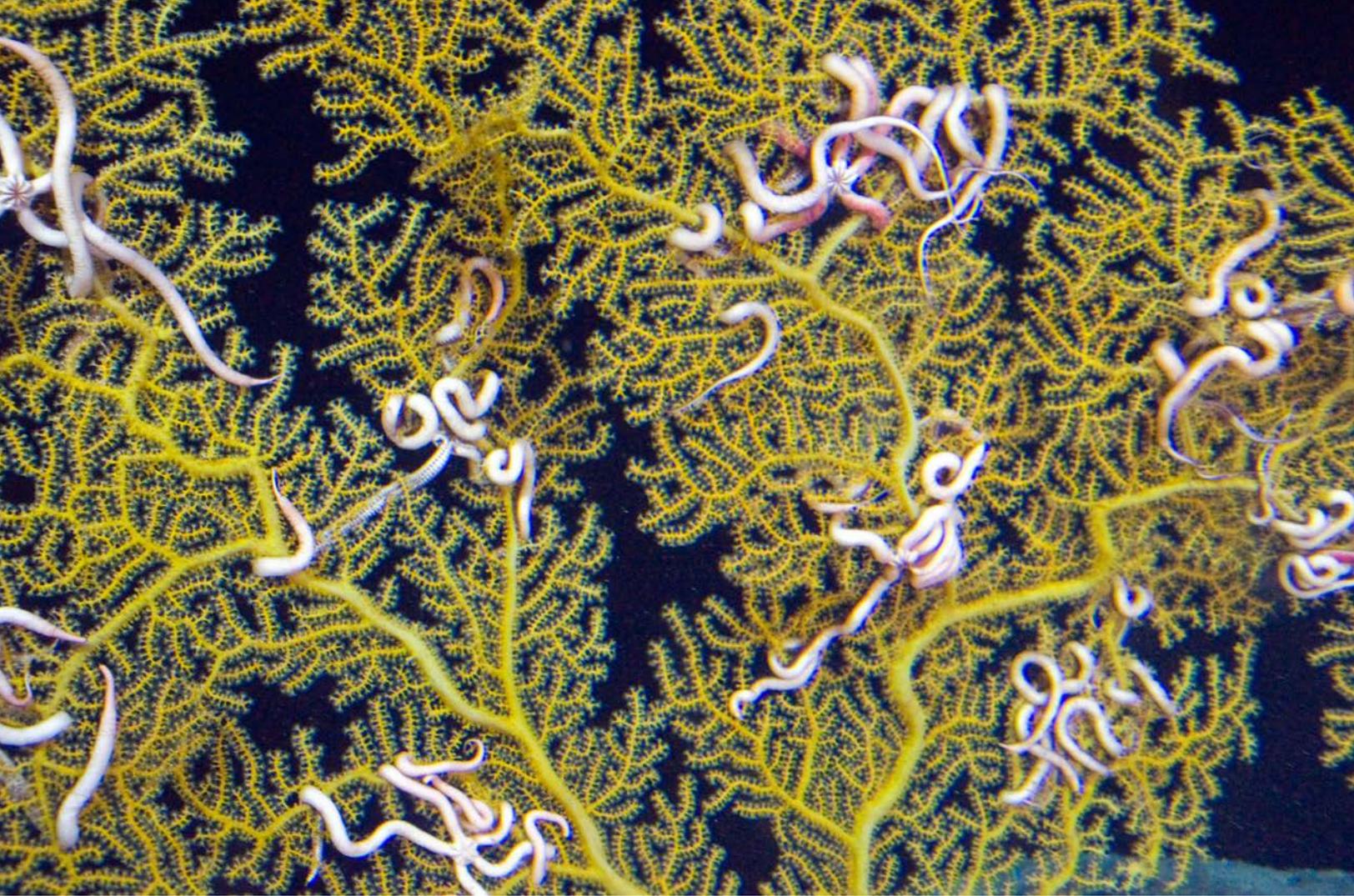


There isn't a lot of food in the deep sea, so the animals that live there grow slowly. This fish is called an Orange Roughy. It can take this fish 40 years to grow from a baby to an adult, and it can live for 200 years.

The Orange Roughy is also a fish that people eat. But because it grows so slowly, it is easy for people to catch too many of them too fast. In some places 90% of these fish have already been caught, and it will take decades for populations to grow back.



Deep sea coral called Lophelia Coral is a lot like the coral that makes shallow water reefs. It is made of lots of tiny organisms living together. Like other deep sea animals, these corals grow very slowly. Scientists have estimated that some of them may be 10,000 years old.



Like in shallow water, deep sea corals can form a habitat for other animals. Here you can see some deep sea Brittle Stars living on a Lophelia Coral.



This book was developed as a companion to Amuseum Naturalis, St. Martin's free museum of nature, heritage and culture. The Amuseum, and this book, were created by Les Fruits de Mer.

Les Fruits de Mer is a non-profit association based in St. Martin whose core mission is to raise awareness about nature, culture, and heritage. The organization carries out this mission through a free museum, publications, films, and public events. Learn more at lesfruitsdemer.com and amuseumnaturalis.com.

