

# Potentially Hazardous Intertidal Organisms

Make sure your students can identify these organisms (from these sheets, a powerpoint presentation, or from John Hoover's Hawaii fish or invertebrate books) before going on their first field trip. All of these organisms are common in Hawaii's intertidal.

## **Cone snails**

- Have a poisonous sting and should not be handled.
- Various patterns, many species can get as large as six inches.
- Identified by their smooth, distinctly elongated triangle shape.

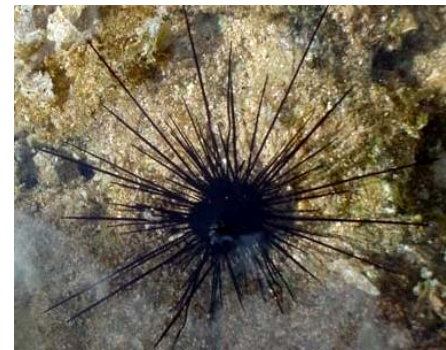


## **Fire worms**

- Have bristles that stick in the skin like cactus spines.
- Often brightly colored, they can grow to about eight inches.
- Identified by stiff bristles that stick out to each side of the worm. The bristles can look like legs, making the fire worm look like a centipede.

## **Long-spined sea urchins**

- Spines are sharp and some are toxic, often black



## **Mantis shrimp**

- Can give a powerful punch or stab
- Often cryptically colored, they occupy burrows in sand and mud or inhabit coral cavities. Most species can grow to about 3 inches.
- Identified by their segmented elongate rectangular bodies.

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## **Moray eels**

- Sharp teeth
- Often reside in holes (sometimes with their heads sticking out)

## **Scorpionfish**

- Poisonous spines
- Often cryptically colored and difficult to detect. They are slow-moving sedentary fish.
- In the intertidal we are most likely to encounter juveniles (about 2-4 inches).



## **Sponges**

- Many species have spicules, which are like tiny shards of glass.
- Many different colors, they grow attached to hard substrate.

**Basically, don't stick your fingers into holes and be careful what you pick up!**