

Feral February Episode 9 – The bigger to eat you with

Description

Throughout the month of February, which I am calling “Feral February,” I am going to do something a little bit different – I’m going to create a series of theme posts every week day about my favourite things in the world: Animals.

Today’s animal is the gulper eel!

Today’s featured animal is an eel that probably does not resemble any other animal you have seen before. This rarely studied animal (due to its fragile body and deep-sea preference) averages one metre in length (or 39 inches) with huge jaws filled with tiny teeth, very small eyes, and a long body that gradually tapers into an extremely thin tail.



Gulper eel. Photo courtesy of Bruce Robison. [Source](#).

The gulper eel’s large jaws can open extremely wide to swallow prey almost as large as itself, and its stomach can expand to accommodate whatever it eats. It is also known as the “pelican eel” because its lower jaw has a pouch similar to that of a pelican, but it is not known if it uses it in a similar fashion (to store fish and other prey for later consumption).

Unlike its fearsome appearance suggests, most species of gulper eels that have been found only have small crustaceans in their stomachs, not large fish. Therefore, its large mouth might be an adaptation to eat a wide variety of smaller prey, instead of one large meal.

Daily dose of trivia:

With such an unusual body shape, the gulper eel is not an active hunter. Researchers believe that instead, the eel uses the bioluminescent organ at the end of its tail to attract prey and lure it into its waiting mouth. They also do not have pelvic fins, swim bladders, or scales. Their muscle segments have a "V-shape", while other fish have "W-shaped" muscle segments.

Category

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