

CYRIL THE COELACANTH

Greetings,
I am Cyril the coelacanth.



I live in **Chaka Canyon** near Cape Vidal in the
iSimangaliso Marine Protected Area
in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 

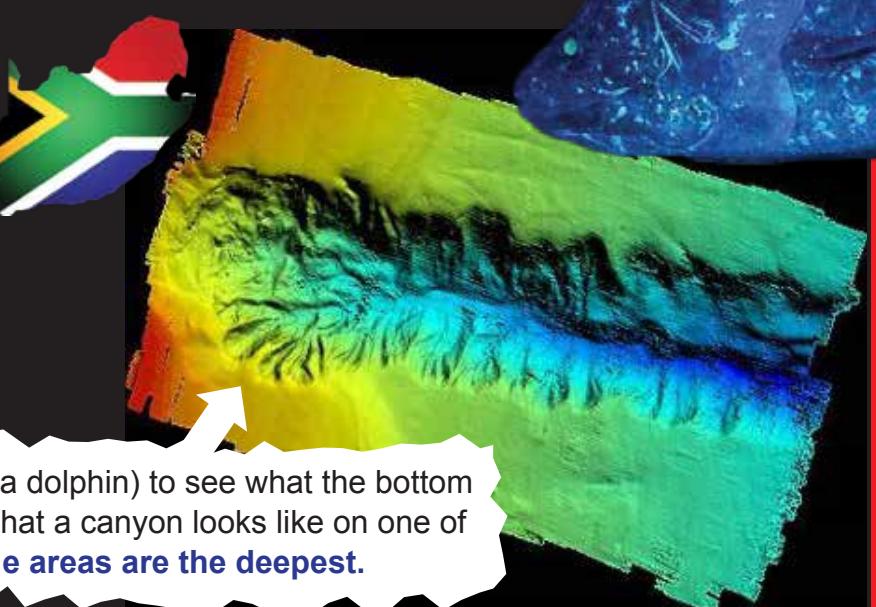


DID YOU KNOW ?

South Africa
has more than
50 underwater canyons and
7 undersea mountains.

*IMAGINE THAT –
A MOUNTAIN UNDER THE SEA!*

Scientists use sound echos (like a dolphin) to see what the bottom of the ocean looks like. This is what a canyon looks like on one of their maps - **the dark blue areas are the deepest**.





Each coelacanth has its own unique spot pattern. My spot patterns are different to Nandi and Shaka, the coelacanths who live in the cave next door.



Scientists thought that we were extinct - like the dinosaurs. But in 1938 a living coelacanth was caught by fishermen near East London. Imagine how excited the scientists were when they realised that we are not extinct! We have been around for over 300 million years - since before the dinosaurs!

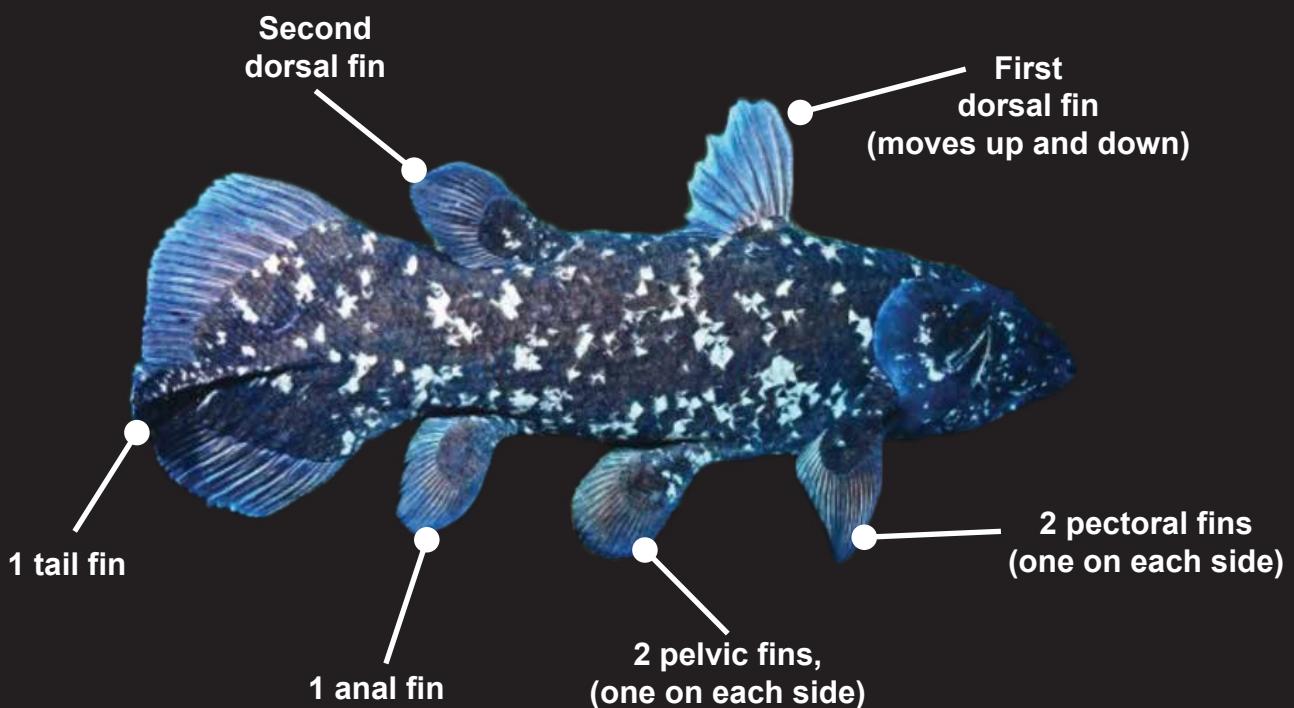
This scientist, **Marjorie Courtney Latimer**, was the first person to recognise that we really are still alive. What a clever lady!



Wikipedia Commons

We can grow up to 2m long and weigh up to 100 kilograms.

We have 8 fins – 2 dorsal fins on top, 2 fleshy pectoral fins (one on each side), 2 fleshy pelvic fins, one fleshy anal fin at the back and a powerful tail fin.

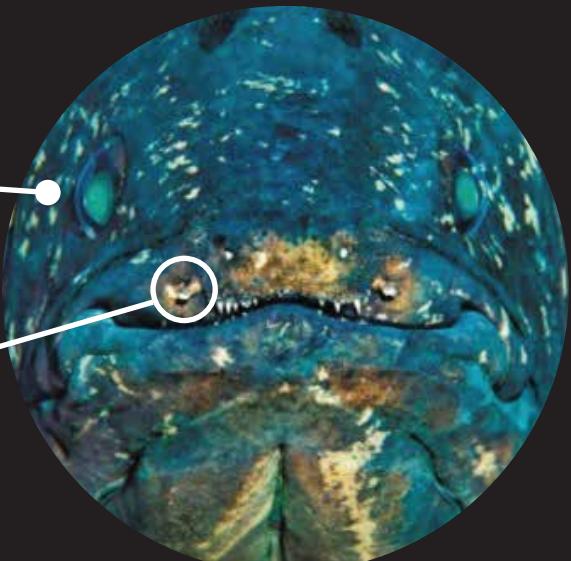


We have an unusual swimming motion a bit like an underwater ballet. It looks like we are 'walking' on our fins.

Coelacanths are nocturnal.
We usually spend our day in caves
and come out at night to hunt for
fish and squid.



We see well
in the dark.



We can also sense life and movement
with a **unique sense organ** in our snouts.

Scientists call this a **rostral organ** and they
think we find food using this organ.



Japanese bigeye



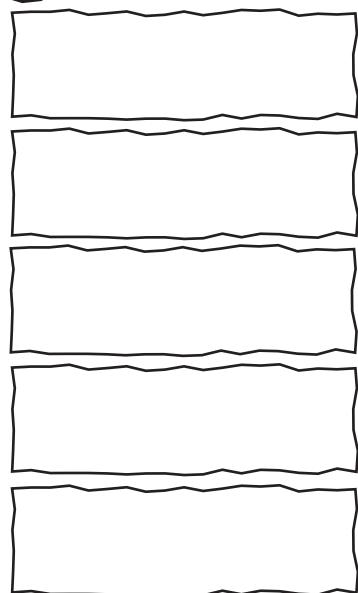
Pineapple fish

In iSimangaliso, we visit the amazing
fields of sponges that live **deep in the**
ocean - between 130 and 180 m.

Sponges are very simple animals that
can filter thousands of litres of water a
day. Fish like to hide from us
in these amazing sponges.

QUESTIONS

1. Where does Cyril live?
2. How many fins does a coelacanth have?
3. What do coelacanths eat?
4. How do you think coelacanths find their food?
5. How can you tell different coelacanths apart?



WORD PUZZLE

coelacanth canyon cave nocturnal squid fish tail fin lantern dark
eel unique pectoral ascend pelvic shark dorsal wreck diver

c	a	v	e	s	q	u	i	d	n
a	o	p	e	c	t	o	r	a	o
n	l	e	e	d	i	v	e	r	c
y	a	l	l	s	h	a	r	k	t
o	n	v	a	s	c	e	n	d	u
n	t	i	n	o	c	t	u	r	r
p	e	c	t	o	r	a	l	u	n
w	r	e	c	k	f	i	n	s	a
u	n	i	q	u	e	l	x	t	l
d	o	r	s	a	l	f	i	s	h

QUESTIONS

1. If Cyril finds a shoal of 31 lanternfish and eats 14, how many lanternfish are left?
2. In the morning, Cyril swims from a depth of 400m where he is feeding on squid back to his cave at a depth of 110m, how many metres has he ascended (come up)?
3. In the morning, Cyril swims from his cave at 110m, down 35m to the dense fields of hairy sponges. What depth are the sponges at?
4. If Cyril has five coelacanths in his cave, how many fins are there all together?

DRAW A SUBMARINE WITH A SCIENTIST

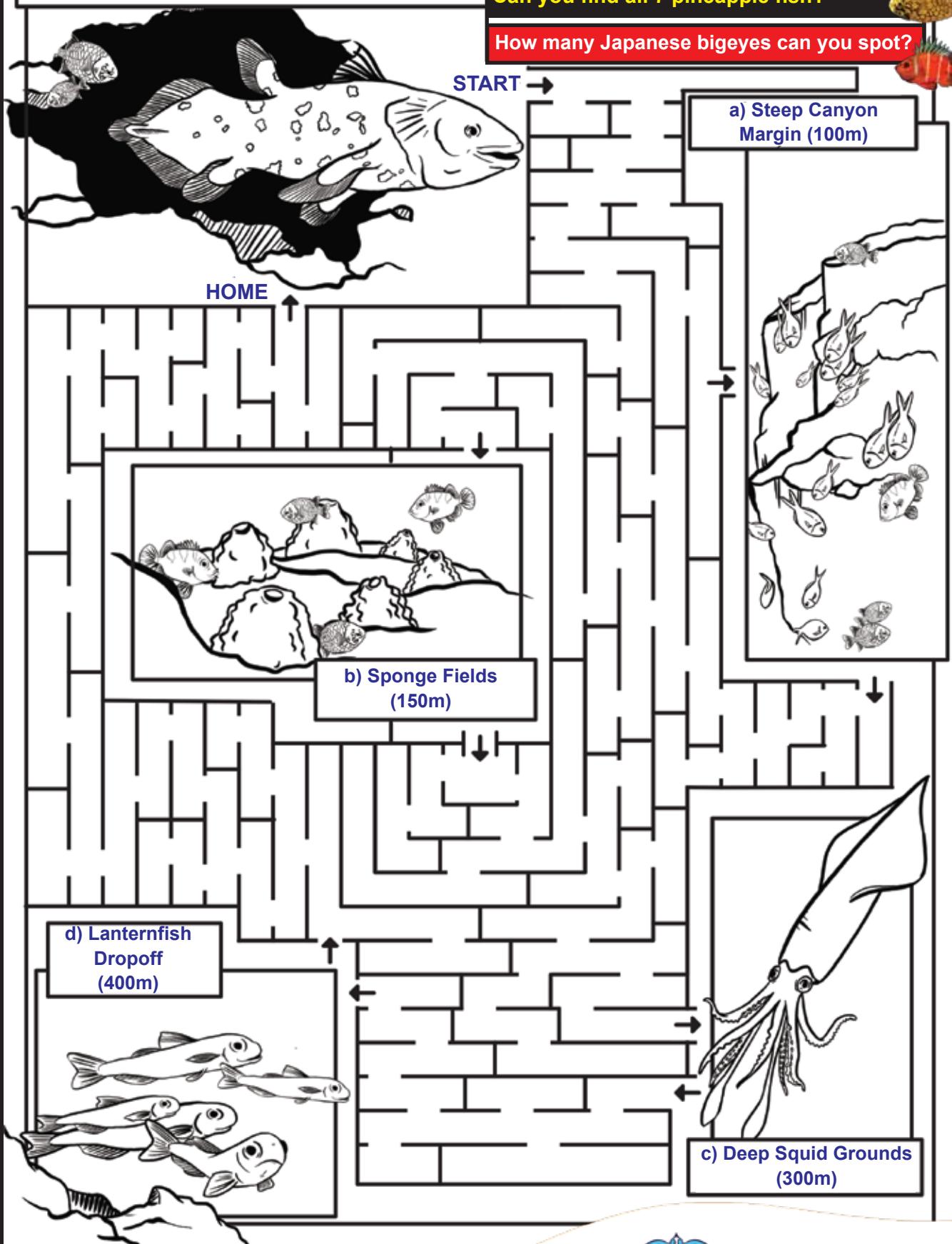


WHO STUDIES COELACANTHS.

Draw the path Cyril takes from his cave at sunset to his favourite feeding spots: from his cave to the steep canyon margin (100m) down to the sponge fields (150m) and on to the deep squid grounds (300m) and deeper still to the lantern fish dropoff (400m) and what route does he take back to his cave at sunrise.

Can you find all 7 pineapple fish?

How many Japanese bigeyes can you spot?



Maze drawn by Robyn Adams



INCORPORATING



Helping people to care for our ocean