



Monetaria moneta

Common name: Money Cowrie

Latin name: *Monetaria moneta*

Local name: ودع



ECOLOGY

Type:

Wild

Role in Ecosystem:

Cowries control algal growth and maintain a healthy balance within coral reef communities

HABITAT

Marine, common in Red Sea. Lives under rocks in shallow water and on exposed reefs at low tide.



Food

Herbivore

Filamentous algae, diatoms and micro algae.



Movement and Communication

Cowries have oral tentacles on which stalked eyes are attached that help them find their prey or potential mates.

They are more active at night time with the mantle fully extended.

If startled or touched, the cowrie can suddenly change colors by withdrawing its mantle completely inside the shell, thus confusing predators.



Social Habits

Solitary

Cowries often will attack one another in one place apparently reflecting territoriality.



Reproduction

Oviparous

Cowries generally mate for life and remain in one area for their entire lives. Once fertilized, they spawn the eggs on hard surfaces and remain to protect them until they hatch. The eggs hatch into drifting Larvae that eventually settle to the bottom and become juveniles. Shells of the juveniles gradually increase in volume, thicken and form a new colour pattern. This stage called callus-building bulla stage.

The adult stage where no further growth occurs and sexual maturity is reached.



Attributes



The common are: Oval, smooth, shiny, white to beige with yellowish margins

Mantles are creamy white colour with blackish brown zebra stripes, with many short papillae.

Mantles (two) extend out and over the dorsal surface of the shell, meeting at midline, and continually deposit enamel.

Shell size on average 30–50 millimetres

INTRODUCTION

The Cowrie is a sea mollusk, common in the Red Sea. They feed on algae and inhabit shallow waters.

They are heavily used in decorations and as hair and clothes ornaments. They are also used in folk divination, as referenced in a popular song by Salah ibn Albadia.

They are marked as least concern, but their population may be threatened by intense harvesting.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

Despite intense harvesting by humans for commercial purposes, cowries are not yet an endangered species.

Cultural value

Cowrie shells are used in folk divination. They are also used for decorations and ornaments.

Cultural expression

ست الودع أرمي الودع

Song by the late artist Salah ibn Albadia talking to a fortune-teller (Known as sit alwadea) to tell him about his lover.

THREATS

Cowries can damage coral reefs and destroy surrounding habitats. Intense harvesting could threaten their population.

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