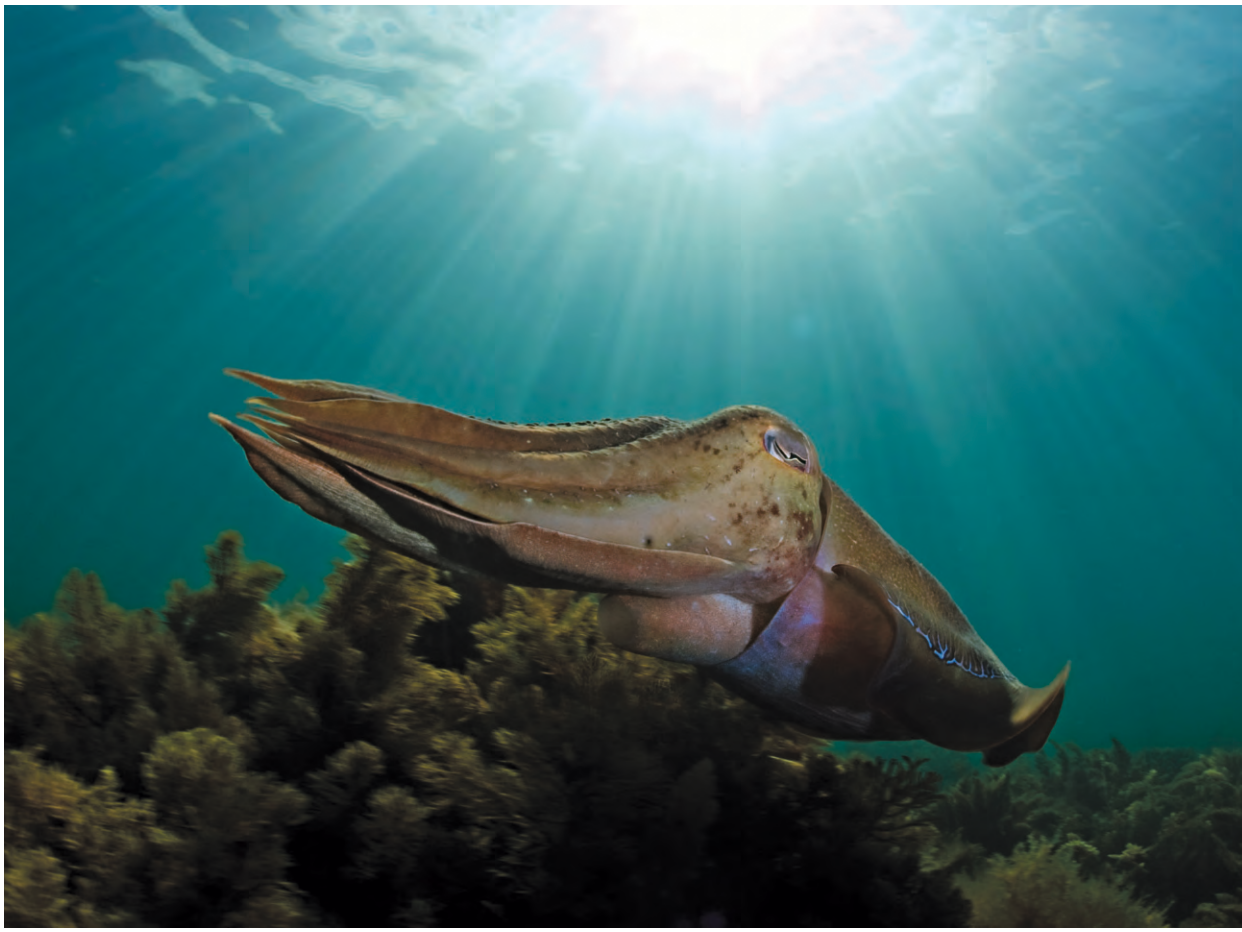
Paul Macdonald

e Sepia Apama congregate every
ear from mid June to mid August
the shallow rocky waters of False
h is bound by the industrial city of
and the picturesque Point Lowly
Australia. It estimated that during
d around 40,000 or more
are present in the bay. This is an
spectacle to literally see 25 to 40
in your mask vision. These are the
own cuttlefish in the world and
to a tube length of 60cm and
to 10kgs.
ay is very special as it is the only
te in the world where cuttlefish are
aggregate in such large numbers
urposes of reproduction. Later in
nd for a shorter period of time
Calamari are also known to
in the bay for mating purposes.
ortance of False Bay has been
d by the South Australian
ent and all cephalopods are now
in the area.
iant Australian Cuttlefish is part
phalopod family and have 8 arms
uses for grabbing, moving and
ge. They also have 2 feeding
that they use to strike with
speed. These are smooth along
th with a tentacular club covered
ers. It uses these feeding tentacles
ts prey which comprises of small
taceans and smaller cuttlefish. It
ctims with its beak like mouth and
d tongue.
epia Apama has a porous internal
d a cuttlebone. Apart from
structural strength for the body,
bone is multi chambered allowing
tional buoyancy control.
g generally is done from the small
around the mantle however if
d it can move surprisingly fast
propulsion by pumping water over
and out their funnel.
iant Australian Cuttlefish only
er one season and their lifespan is
months, dying after breeding. Wild



dolphins are often seen by divers during mating season feeding on the dying cuttlefish. Some cuttlefish do not reach maturity to breed in the first season so will survive through to the next. These older cuttlefish are the largest in the next season.

Cuttlefish have been described as the chameleons of the sea. They use 3 layers of colour changing cells to put on some amazing electric flashing displays or to blend in with their environment. The first layer consists of chromataphores which sit just beneath the surface of the skin. The chromataphores consist of a central saccule cell that contains a colour pigment. This cell is attached to 15 to 25 muscles that stretch and contract to control the colour of the pigment. It has been estimated that there are up to 30,000 chromatophores per square inch, for photographers it's a bit like 30,000 dpi.

phores and they reflect
of light illuminates them.
g season females are
males in a ratio of around
eved that males stay in the
le season whilst the females
e competition amongst
nales attention is quite
ut on beautiful flashing
colours that roll and pulse
to warn off other males.
tack each other with their
are often seen with chunks
m by rivals. It is incredible
males imitate females in
close to other females and
h them while the other
still fighting.
vill mate face to face with
uring the mating season
and will hold several different packets of sperm, selecting up to three of these packets to fertilise her eggs.

Divers are able to get quite close to the cuttlefish during mating season. They are far too preoccupied with their sexual goings on to be concerned with large bubble blowing divers.

In recent years the numbers of Giant Australian Cuttlefish attending the aggregation has diminished significantly and has become cause for great concern amongst environmentalists and locals. Whilst there are several theories about why the numbers have declined, they all remain unsubstantiated and there are a number of studies being undertaken in this regard. Hopefully the situation can be rectified in the near future and the cuttlefish can return to their historical aggregation numbers.