

## **Marine Life on the Rocky Shores**

A deep underwater canyon divides Kushiro Bay into two distinct environments, each supporting different marine life. The west side has a gentle, sandy shoreline, while the east side has steep, rocky cliffs that stretch around the coast to Nemuro. A number of factors contribute to the biological richness of the rocky side. The rocks provide platforms for kelp and shelter for crustaceans, whelks, and small fish. Furthermore, warm and cold currents meet here, bringing zooplankton and phytoplankton to the area. These conditions attract migratory fish such as sardines, creating fertile fishing grounds.

### *Adapting to the environment*

Some fish, like the rock greenling (*Hexagrammos lagocephalus*) and the whitespotted greenling (*Hexagrammos stelleri*), have developed the ability to change color to camouflage themselves against rocks. Others, including the great sculpin (*Myoxocephalus polyacanthocephalus*) and the Gilbert's Irish lord (*Hemilepidotus gilberti*), have spiny bodies and fins that protect them from larger predators and help them anchor themselves among rocks.