

SUNFLOWER STARFISH OR SEA STAR, *Pycnopodia hellanthoides* (Brandt)
NÁW K'ÁANÁASGA, "octopus's friend"
These large starfish resemble octopus in that they have many legs. Hence the name "octopus's friend." They were known to eat many clams.

COMMON STARFISH OR SEA STAR, *Pisaster ochraceus* (Brandt)
SK'ÁÁ7AM, "crossed"
These starfish were used for fertilizer in potato gardens. Together with sea wrack, they were mulched into the soil. They were said to make the potatoes especially dry. Seagulls eat starfish.

SEA CUCUMBER, *Parastichopus californicus* (Stimpson)
GIINUU
One sunny morning in May, 1973, I carried my kayak over the tidal flats in front of Skidegate Village, launched it, and headed for Torrens Island, Sgayáas, just offshore. The small island was at its most beautiful. The sun fell brightly upon its white cliff and the low tide had exposed its rich inter-tidal zone. I headed for the small beach on the north side, where I had been told that the Giinuu, or sea cucumbers, were very plentiful. I stopped paddling as I neared the island and looked down through the clear, calm water. There were dozens of sea cucumbers, immobile and vulnerable. I landed on the rocky beach and began collecting those cucumbers that had dried up with the tide. Soon I headed back to the village with a bucket full of slimy creatures. But the old people looked into the bucket and laughed, one by one, as I visited them. They did not want any of the sea cucumbers. I thought that perhaps they were a very undesirable food. But as I found out later, they were considered appetizing only if properly scraped on barnacles to rid them of slime. In the early days, they were often brought up from beneath the surface with an implement made by lashing a small stick at right angles to a long pole. The cucumbers were draped over the small stick and pulled up quickly. Often, however, they could be collected at a very low tide, as I had done.

PREPARATION
In the early days the head of the fresh sea cucumber was bitten off and eaten raw by many people. After the viscera had been squeezed out, the creature was skewered through the abdominal end with a red cedar or spruce limb. A number of sea cucumbers were usually skewered on each limb, which was sharpened at one end and peeled. The needles of the limb were left on the tip of the branch. The flexible end of the limb or withe was tied around the last sea cucumber, so the rest would not slide off. The withe was held by the butt end and the sea cucumbers were pulled or brushed back and forth over thick growths of barnacles. This abrasive action was continued for about twenty minutes until the bud-like bumps on the outside skin, as well as much of the slime, were rubbed off. The cucumbers, which were very firm at this stage, were then soaked in fresh water for a few hours until they softened. In the early days they were often soaked in a small stream. Finally the sea cucumbers were boiled for about twenty minutes, washed, and eaten. All of the cucumber, which shrank considerably and resembled a small sausage when cooked, was eaten. Sea cucumbers have not been eaten by the Skidegate people for many years.



Figure 8. David W. Ellis brushing a sea cucumber on barnacles.

Photo by Eileen Ellis