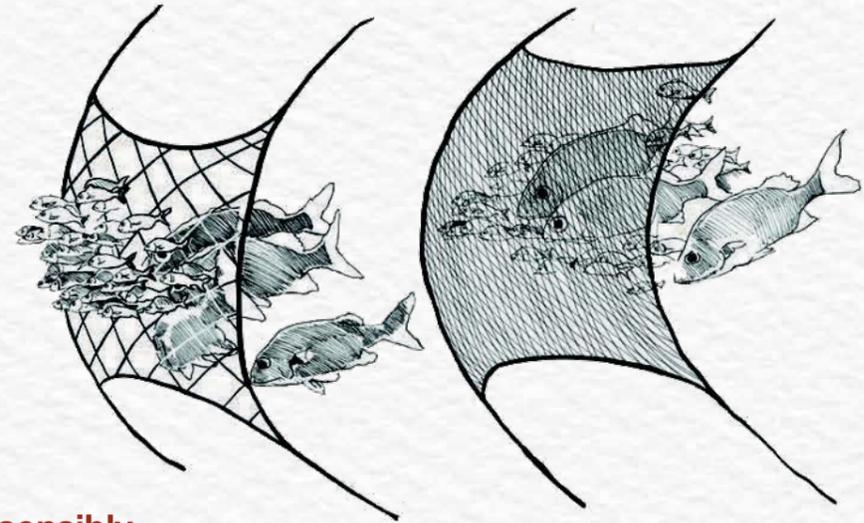# LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Selling shells can seem like an innocent way of making money. It is not just you and your friends who take the shells though. Imagine thousands and thousands of people all along the coast picking up seashells, or even worse, taking live sea snails out of the sea. Together it is possible to remove so many sea snails that the sea environment is changed and damaged. Sea animals have a particular role in the ecosystem, some grazing on algae, others as predators, and many acting as the ocean's waste disposal system, eating dead matter. Without the grazers, algae may grow out of control, stopping other creatures from living. It is far better to plan your use of marine animals and keep track of their numbers over many years. Take only those you know to be surplus.

Keystone species

A keystone species is like a keystone in a building. All the other stones depend on that one being there and being strong, or the building may fall down. The giant triton snail (*Charonia tritonis*) feeds on the crown-of-thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*). This starfish eats coral. When the triton are overfished, the starfish goes out of control and kills off the coral, home to many other creatures.

Sharing sensibly

Fish are a common resource and need common agreements to care for them. Clever ways to protect fish involve setting up marine reserves, and having closed seasons. 'Closed seasons' are times when fish are not taken from the sea at all.

Another way to look after the fish is to have nets which allow the young fish to escape. Only adult fish are caught, which allows them to breed before being killed. This allows the fish population to recover and increase its numbers. If the fish you catch are preserved, by smoking, salting them, or if you have the facilities, by freezing, less are wasted and they may be more valuable when sold. Governments and regional councils must take responsibility for trying to stop foreign boats from fishing in sovereign waters. Can you think of other clever ways to stop wasting fish?