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Coral Reef: The Ocean's Coolest Neighborhood

By Lydia Lukidis



There might not be anything cooler in the whole ocean than a coral reef!



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A reef is a shallow underwater area made of coral. Many fish and sea animals live in and around reefs.

animals live on the actual reef, like starfish, snails, and clams. Other species swim around the reef, like fish and sharks.

Let's talk more about these little coral polyps. Like all animals, coral polyps need to eat. Their diet consists mainly of other miniscule animals, such as plankton and algae. The algae get their food from the sun. Because sunlight can only penetrate shallow water, the algae and coral polyps live in shallow water. This is where coral reefs generally form. A wide variety of animals live in coral reefs. Some

There are three types of coral reefs. Fringing reefs form along a coastline. Barrier reefs grow a bit farther from the land. They form parallel to the shore, separated from it by a deep channel of water. Finally, coral atolls are coral reefs that encircle a lagoon.

Coral reefs exist all around the world. The biggest one is called the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is located off the northeast coast of Australia. It is very long, stretching out for 1,429 miles (2,300 km). It can even be seen from outer



A coral reef is made from billions of tiny polyps, like the ones seen here.



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Coral reefs are rainbows of color. Coral polyps can be orange, pink, blue, green, red, or almost any color imaginable.

some kinds of medicine. However, a serious problem is occurring: many coral reefs are dying. Pollution and over fishing are the main causes. And since coral reefs take a very long time to grow, they cannot

grow fast enough to replace the damage. As a result, the coral reefs around the world are starting to disappear. Some scientists predict that someday soon most of the coral reefs will be gone. That is why we have to take good care of them. We should do our best to protect these incredible living communities for generations to come!

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1. Describe the rate at which coral reefs grow.



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d. Coral reefs cannot endure the currents in deep ocean water.

3. Circle the two hemispheres that the Great Barrier Reef is located within.

Northern Southern Eastern Western

4. Based on the information in the article, provide a brief definition of each of the three types of coral reefs.

fringing reef: _____

barrier reef: _____

coral atoll: _____

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.



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5. _____ pollution
6. _____ vital
7. _____ miniscule
8. _____ channel
9. _____ predict
10. _____ lagoon
- e. a pool of salt water separated from the ocean by a coral reef
- f. very tiny; microscopic
- g. the act of being formed or developed
- h. the presence of harmful substances in the environment
- i. a long passage of water
- j. a number of different things

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In the article, "Coral Reef: The Ocean's Coolest Neighborhood," you learned that coral reefs are very important for the well-being of our planet.



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barrier reef: barrier reefs form parallel to the shore, with a
channel of water running between.

coral atoll: Coral atolls form around a lagoon like a circle.

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environment

9. c predict

i. a long passage of water

10. e lagoon

j. a number of different things