

Please remember: corals are very important to The Bahamas so don't touch, stand, walk or anchor your boat on the reefs. They are easily broken. Touching stresses corals *and* the bacteria, oils and sunscreen on our hands is harmful to their health.

How many reef words
can you find?

A L L C F K L B
L Z F I O E O N
G C S R K R V V
A H V R M S A Q
E H O E V I D L
V N V E L H S T
S F T D G R P H
U R C H I N C O

Circle them all!



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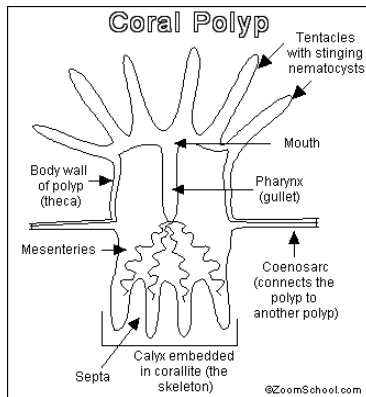
For more information about the Bahamian environment or about fishing rules and regulations in The Bahamas, please contact FRIENDS or visit our website at www.friendsoftheenvironment.org.



WHAT ARE CORAL REEFS?
...AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Animal, Mineral or Vegetable?

Though corals are very pretty and they may look like plants, they are actually animals! Each large coral that you see is really a colony of many small coral polyps living together. Sometimes these corals even share their food!



Did You Know?

Corals have roommates! There are tiny algae living inside of corals. They are called zooxanthellae (zoo-zan-thell-ee). The "zoox" help the coral by providing nutrients for them and the corals provide a safe place for the "zoox" to live.

There are TWO kinds of coral:

Hard Coral



Hard corals are reef builders and have a calcium carbonate base, like this brain coral (above).

Soft Coral



Soft corals are not reef builders, but they do provide important habitat. The picture above shows a sea fan.

What do corals eat?

They eat tiny animals and plants found in plankton & also get energy from the nutrients made by photosynthesizing algae that live inside them.

So what eats corals?

Animals that eat coral are called "corallivores". Some fish, sea stars and mollusks eat coral. Examples are parrotfish and butterflyfish.

What do coral reefs do for us?

- * Reefs provide homes for the fish and crawfish that we like to eat
- * Reefs help protect our shores from storm surge
- * Corals are a big source for the sand found on our beaches
- * Reefs are a great place for diving and snorkeling, and are an attraction for visitors



Why are corals found in The Bahamas?

Corals are picky about where they like to live. They choose areas where they can get good sunlight (to feed their algae friends) so they are normally found in clear and relatively shallow waters. They also like areas with good water flow, because this brings in more plankton food for them! Most corals can only thrive in certain temperatures. Sometimes the water in The Bahamas gets too hot and the corals "bleach" - this means that the zooxanthellae either die or leave the corals.