



**Spectacular
Animal Towns**

The Coral Reef

A Giant City Under the Sea

by Stephen Person

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A Giant City Under the Sea



by Stephen Person

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Coral Reef Ecologist and Director of
The Nature Conservancy's Marine Conservation Program
in the Asia-Pacific Region

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Color and Action

As a young boy, Rod Salm first saw a **coral reef** while swimming in the ocean near his home in Mozambique (*moh-zuhm-BEEK*), Africa. “It was confusing,” he remembers. “There was so much color and so much movement and so many different creatures doing different things. It was hard for me to take it all in.”





Today, Rod is a coral reef scientist. He studies reefs all over the world, from Hawaii to the huge Great Barrier Reef of Australia. He is still amazed by the color and action he sees. “Schools of jewel-colored fish dart quickly in and out of cracks in the reef,” he says. “It’s like nothing at all found on land.”

Coral reefs are found in the **coastal** waters of more than 100 countries.

Cities Under the Sea

Rod Salm says that exploring a coral reef is like visiting a magical city under the sea. Just like most human cities, coral reefs are **diverse** places. In fact, coral reefs are the most diverse **habitats** in the ocean. They are home to more than one million **species** of fish, plants, and other sea life.



More than 4,000 different kinds of fish, including the triggerfish, trumpetfish, and coral grouper, live in and around coral reefs. New species of reef fish are discovered each year.

The Great Barrier Reef is the biggest reef in the world. It stretches for more than 1,400 miles (2,253 km) along the coast of Australia. This reef is home to 1,500 species of fish. It also has more than 5,000 kinds of **mollusks**, such as clams and oysters. When scientists studied one basketball-size chunk of coral there, they found 103 different species of sea worms!

The Great Barrier Reef (shown below) is not a single reef. It is made up of about 3,000 reefs. Parts of the reef extend 100 miles (161 km) from the shore.

Reefs cover less than 1 percent of the ocean floor. Yet they are home to almost a quarter of all the plant and animal species in the entire ocean.

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About the Author

Stephen Person has written many textbooks, as well as children's books about the environment, nature, and history. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and daughter.

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**Spectacular
Animal Towns**

The Coral Reef

A Giant City Under the Sea

As a young boy, Rod Salm first saw a coral reef while swimming in the ocean near his home in Mozambique, Africa. He remembers being amazed by all the different creatures and all the color and movement on display. Today, Rod is a coral reef scientist. He studies coral reefs all over the world—and is still amazed by the color and action he sees. “It’s like nothing at all found on land,” he says.

Welcome to the coral reef—a giant city under the sea. Here you’ll discover how tiny coral polyps form stony skeletons that become large “buildings” rising up from the ocean floor. You’ll also find out how clownfish, parrotfish, and other colorful residents depend on the reef—and on one another—to survive.

The Ant’s Nest

A Huge, Underground City

The Bat’s Cave

A Dark City

The Beaver’s Lodge

Building with Leftovers

The Coral Reef

A Giant City Under the Sea

The Honey Bee’s Hive

A Thriving City

The Prairie Dog’s Town

A Perfect Hideaway

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