



Welcome to the Coral Reef



by Honor Head

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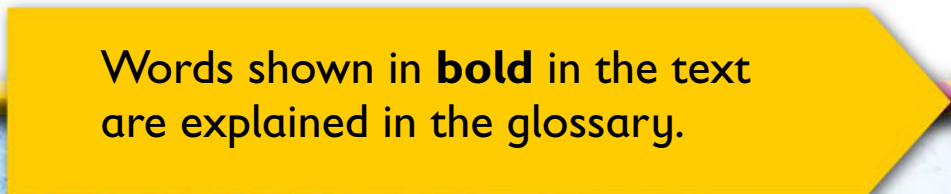

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Words shown in **bold** in the text
are explained in the glossary.




Welcome to a Coral Reef

Who and what lives on the Great Barrier Reef?

This vast **coral reef** is home to plants, fish, sea anemones, and turtles.



The plants and animals get what they need to live from their **habitat**.



A coral reef is a type of ecosystem. An ecosystem includes all the living things in an area. It also includes non-living things, such as the sun and sea. Everything in an ecosystem has its own part to play.

The Great Barrier Reef is in the Coral Sea off the coast of Australia.

Let's find out what happens in this habitat. Welcome to a coral reef!

What Is a Coral Reef?

A coral reef is built by tiny animals called coral polyps.

Some types of coral polyps have a hard, rock-like outer skeleton.



Polyp

Skeleton

A reef starts to form when a coral polyp attaches itself to a rock on the sea floor.

The single coral begins to bud, or divide itself in half, to make another coral.

Billions of corals join together to form a single colony, or group.



A coral colony

Many colonies join up on the sea floor to form a rocky coral reef.

Coral reef

A section of the Great Barrier Reef

What do corals feed on?

The Great Barrier Reef has formed throughout an area as big as 64 million football fields!