

Life on the Bahamian Coral Reef

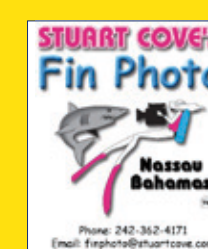
Coral Reefs cover less than 1% of the sea floor, but contain 25% of all marine species. These species depend on each other for their survival. Some organisms that live on our reefs are:

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|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Zooxanthellae | 5. Sponge | 9. Long-Spined Urchin | 15. Butterflyfish | 20. Green Moray Eel |
| 2. Phytoplankton / Microscopic Algae | 6. Soft Coral | 10. Queen Conch | (corallivore) | 21. Barracuda |
| 3. Marine Algae / Seaweed | 7. Hard Coral | 11. Silversides/Pilchards | 16. Grunts | 22. Nurse Shark |
| 4. Seagrass | a. Elkhorn Coral | 12. Parrotfish | 17. Snappers | 23. Caribbean Reef Shark |
| | b. Brain Coral | 13. Queen Angelfish | 18. Black Grouper | 24. Hawksbill Turtle |
| | 8. Sea Cucumber | 14. Spiny Lobster/Crawfish (detritivore) | 19. Nassau Grouper | 25. Seastar |

● Producer ● Herbivore/Omnivore ● Carnivore



Photo credits:



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Tiny colonial animals called polyps secrete a limestone skeleton which builds the structure of the reef. Microscopic algae called zooxanthellae live symbiotically inside the polyps' tissues.

Benefits of Reefs

Reefs provide:

- a habitat for marine organisms
- a supply of seafood
- shoreline protection
- employment through fishing and tourism
- sand and beaches
- recreation for locals and tourists
- opportunities for scientific research
- medicinal and commercial products

Coral Reef Conservation in The Bahamas

Coral Reef Education – BREEF and other conservation partners raise awareness of coral reefs through school programmes, field trips, public campaigns and teacher training workshops.

Protection of Connected Habitats – Marine habitats are interlinked; many reef species need several different habitats, including coral reefs, wetlands, seagrass beds, beaches, tidal flats and deep sea areas, to complete their life cycle. Protected areas, land use planning, proper waste disposal and removal of invasive species, help to protect these habitats.

Scientific Research – Scientists collect useful data to guide management efforts. Coral reef surveys, coral propagation activities, conch, grouper and crawfish studies, invasive species (lionfish) research and removals are being conducted in The Bahamas.

Legislation to Protect Important Species – The harvest of coral, sea turtles and commercial shark fishing is prohibited in The Bahamas. Closed seasons, size limits, gear restrictions, bag limits for sport-fishing and restricted entry into the fishery are designed to prevent over exploitation of marine resources.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – Marine Parks and Reserves protect critical marine habitats. National Parks are managed by The Bahamas National Trust. Marine Reserves are managed by the Department of Marine Resources. The Government of The Bahamas has committed to expand the protected area network by protecting 20% of the Bahamas' marine environment by 2020.

Protected Areas



Legislation & Enforcement



Habitat Protection



Education



Scientific Research



MPAs that protect Coral Reefs (2012)

Abaco

1. Walker's Cay National Park
2. No Name Cay Marine Reserve
3. Fowl Cays National Park
4. Pelican Cay Land and Sea Park

Andros

5. North and South Marine Parks

Exuma

6. Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park
7. Moriah Harbour Cay National Park
8. The Exuma (Jewish Cay) Marine Reserve

Others

9. The Conception Island National Park
10. Little Inagua National Park
11. South Berry Islands Marine Reserve

A third of the Caribbean's coral reefs are located in The Bahamas. Barrier reefs are generally found on the eastern (windward) side of islands. Fringing reefs are located near shore and patch reefs are found on the shallow banks.