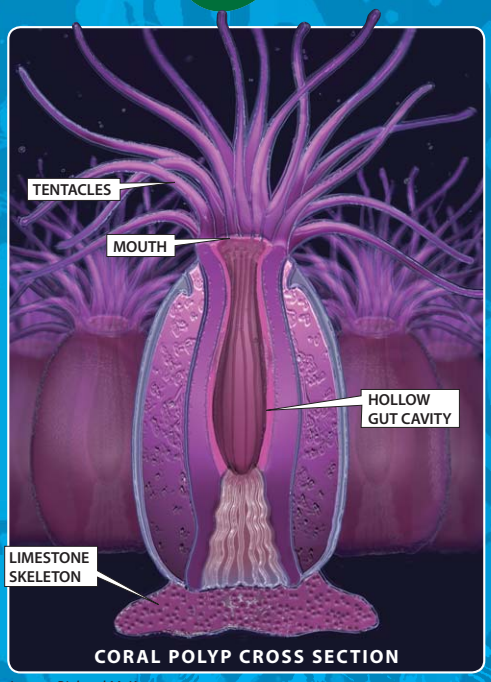
Coral Reef Communities



CORAL POLYP CROSS SECTION

Image: Richard McKenna

Coral reefs grow off Western Australia's coastline from the far north all the way down to Rottnest Island. The most significant coral reefs are found along Western Australia's so-called Coral Coast, stretching some 1,000 kilometres from Cervantes in the south to Exmouth in the north.

Coral reefs can take on various forms such as fringing, barrier and atoll reefs.

Corals are colonies of tiny tubular animals called polyps and are generally classified as either hard or soft corals. The hard coral polyp secretes a cup-shaped limestone skeletal case that supports and protects the soft body of the coral polyp. When the polyp dies, the hard skeleton remains. Coral reefs are formed over thousands of years with the build up of millions of these coral skeletons.

Reef building coral polyps are in a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) partnership with zooxanthellae – tiny, single-celled algae contained in the cells of the polyps. The zooxanthellae provide nutrients for the coral polyps and in return the coral protects the algae.

Unscramble each of the clue words. Then copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells with the same number to reveal the message.

CORLA POPLYS
2 44 43 31 54 27 26 58 12

TANHLLEEXAOZO
53 59 36 13 62 9 55 5 18

CNSETTALE
60 24 20 63 33 28 6 19 50

TUMHO
16 14 15 41

SILNEEMOT KELSONTE
32 11 49 8 48 29 38 37 52 25 42 40 39 61

NIGFIGRN
10 4 22 56 35 47 46 45

BERRIAR
1 7 23 57 30

TALLO
17 21 3 34 51

1 | 2 3 4 5 6 | 7 8 9 10 | 11 12 | 13 14 15 | 16 17 D 18 | 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

27 10 | 28 29 30 31 32 . | 33 34 35 36 37 | 1 38 D | 39 40 41 42 43

44 4 45 1 46 47 48 49 50 | 1 51 52 53 | 54 55 33 26 | 1 56 | 57 16 58 59 30 60 1 61 62

54 1 43 63 .

Naturaliste Marine Discovery Centre
Government of Western Australia Department of Fisheries
39 Northside Drive, Hillarys Boat Harbour, Hillarys, Western Australia 6025
Tel: (08) 9203 0339 www.nmdc.com.au