

Reefs at Risk

Hundreds of clownfish dart in and out of the gaps in coral reefs. The reefs are home to thousands of ocean plants and animals. Along with fish, those animals include crabs, turtles, and sea horses.

Those ocean creatures may have no place to live in the future. Many coral reefs around the world have been destroyed, and many more are being destroyed. Some scientists say more than half of the world's reefs may be gone by the year 2030.

What is causing coral reefs to disappear? Scientists say people are largely to blame. Ships and fishing nets often damage the reefs. Other threats include pollution, storms, and disease.

It's Alive!

Coral reefs may look like rocks, but they are actually living structures. They are made up of tiny sea animals. Those tiny creatures are called coral polyps.

The polyps build hard shells around themselves. When a polyp dies, it leaves behind its shell. Young polyps attach themselves to the old shells. Over many years, the polyps form a coral reef.

Saving the Reefs

Scientists are working hard to protect coral reefs. They are mapping and studying the reefs. Many protected areas are being widened. Fishing is not allowed in those areas. Solving the coral reef problem is a challenge, said one scientist. "It requires us to understand what's going on much better than we do."



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