



What is a coral reef?

- Corals are made up of tiny animals called '**polyps**' (related to jellyfish)
- Many of these live in **sybiosis** with an algae called 'zooxanthellae'.
- The zooxanthellae live inside the polyps, and use **photosynthesis** to make food for the polyps

Coral reefs in The Philippines

- The coral reefs of the Philippines are part of the **Coral Triangle**.
- Here there is the perfect combination of warm water, lots of light, and a flow of nutrients from ocean currents, to allow coral species to thrive.
- There are **more coral reef species** found in this little corner than anywhere else on earth!!



Why are coral reefs important?



They provide important habitats for **millions** of species that don't live anywhere else. They support **more species per unit area** than ANY other marine environment!!



These millions of species are a vital source of information for the production of **human medicine**.



Reefs protect **important coastal ecosystems** (like mangroves) from strong waves and erosion.



Coral reefs also provide huge **economic benefit** to their human neighbours through fishing and tourism - over **100 million people** rely on the coral reef ecosystem in the coral triangle

How are reefs being threatened?

Coral reefs are highly susceptible to **pollution** in the water because:

- They need **CLEAR** water to allow lots of **sunlight** to get through to them.
- A lot of coral species **filter sea water** for food and nutrients.



Coral reefs rely on very specific temperatures and water levels to survive. This means that changes of less than 1 **degree** in ocean temperature can cause entire reefs to **die out**. With the current trend in ocean temperatures going up, coral reefs are very high risk.

Coral reefs are very sensitive to direct physical damage. The main issues from tourism are:

- People **touching** and **taking** coral
- **Anchor damage** from boats



How can YOU help the reef?



DO NOT TOUCH any part of a coral reef either with your hands or accidentally with your fins.



DO NOT take anything from the ocean, even if it is dead!

- Everything, alive or dead is important to the ocean ecosystem.
- Dead coral and shells break down and put vital nutrients back into the sea.

DO NOT use **SUN SCREEN** in the water! The chemicals in sun cream are really damaging to reefs. Apply cream an hour before swimming if you need it!



Think about your life style:

- Reduce your plastic use and don't buy products that contain **microbeads** - these are all extremely damaging to sea creatures and reefs
- Think about using **fewer** products that contain **chemicals** (look at your shampoos, soaps, laundry detergent...) - all of these end up in the ocean!

