



Reef Educational Materials 9-12 Grade

What Coral Reefs Do:

Coral reefs are crucial to ocean life and fulfill a wide variety of purposes for humans and animals alike.

For animals, coral reefs support more species per unit area than any other marine environment. This includes about 4,000 species of fish, 800 species of hard corals, and more. They provide animals with food, protection, and habitat. Scientists estimate there are up to 8 million undiscovered species living around the ocean reefs.

Reefs also serve as a filtration system for the ocean. Corals and sponges can absorb particles from the water, helping to make it clearer and cleaner. However, they cannot exist in murky or strongly polluted waters as they absorb everything, including pollutants.

Did you know that your pet's poo is an ocean pollutant?

Other Harmful Pollutants include:

- Oil & Gas Boat Fuel
- Lawn Fertilizer
- Plastic Soda Rings
- Plastic Bags

Why They're Important:

Coral reefs are critical for human and marine life. Without coral reefs, no marine life can exist. This would make it impossible for any fishing or related activities. As long as humans have existed, fish and other marine animals have served as a form of food. They also prevent the erosion of our stunning Florida beaches by protecting against strong currents and waves.

Our reefs are suffering due to pollution, and to continue our favorite activities we have to protect them.

How We Can Help:

Reduce pollution. Make sure to clean up after yourselves at all times. If you see trash on the ground, move it to an appropriate garbage or recycling bin. This is one way to help keep our waters clean so coral reefs can do their jobs.

Be careful where you fish. Contact with items like motors, anchors, and fishing nets can cause damage to the reefs. Try anchoring your boat somewhere with a sandy bottom.

Help create artificial reefs. Big Bend Coastal Conservancy (BBCC) uses concrete sections to create extensions for the specific local reefs. Contact BBCC to find out how you can get involved.