

Identifying Coral Type

using the Coral Health Chart

Learning Objectives

At the end of this field activity, students will be able to:

- Select coral types in the field.
- Identify coral types used by the Coral Health Chart.
- Identify invertebrates living around corals.

Equipment

- Booties, hat and sunscreen
- Waterproof slate or paper with pencil
- Underwater camera (if available)
- Viewing tube (if available)
- Waterproof ID guide (if available)
- ID reference books

Instructions

CoralWatch



soft (SO)



boulder (BO)



branching (BR)



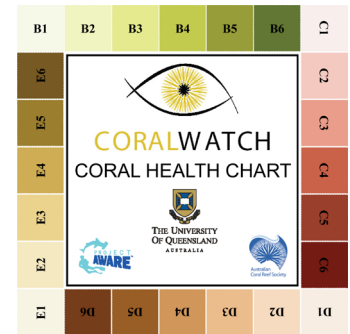
plate (PL)

The Coral Health Chart uses four coral types to classify corals. **Branching** refers to any branching coral, such as Acropora species. **Boulder** refers to any massive or rounded corals, such as some Platygyra and Porites species. **Plate** refers to any coral that forms a plate-like shape, such as tabular Acropora species, and the **soft** category refers to corals lacking a hard skeleton.

1. Copy the coral type template on a waterproof slate.
2. Locate a colony of coral, observe it and record what type it is. Use the types described on the Coral Health Chart.
3. Sketch the coral.
4. List any marine organisms that you observe near the coral.
5. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Are there mainly soft or hard corals in your local area?
 - b. In which zone do most corals appear to be?
 - c. What is the most common coral growth form?
 - d. What is the most common species of coral?

Teacher notes

- This activity should be conducted in the lagoon at low tide.
- Because identifying coral species is very difficult, CoralWatch classifies coral types according to easily identified groups. For this purpose, coral types are described by the overall shape ('growth form') of coral colonies. There are hundreds of different coral species, each with unique shapes and colours. Sometimes the colour or shape may not clearly match the options on the Coral Health Chart. If it is difficult to select a colour or coral type, simply record the closest type. If a particular coral is too difficult to classify, just skip this coral and move on to the next one.
- CoralWatch would classify most free living, encrusting and foliaceous corals as plates.
- CoralWatch would classify most digitate corals as branching.



CORAL TYPES

Branching

Marine life sighted

Boulder

Marine life sighted

Plate

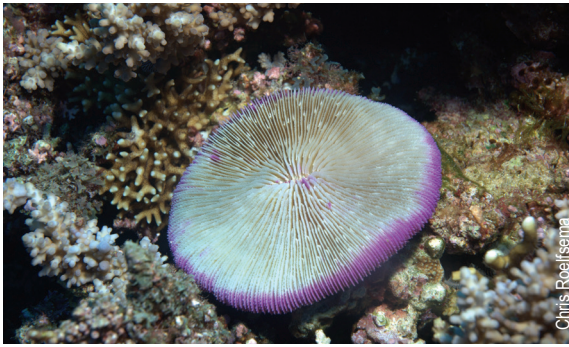
Marine life sighted

Soft

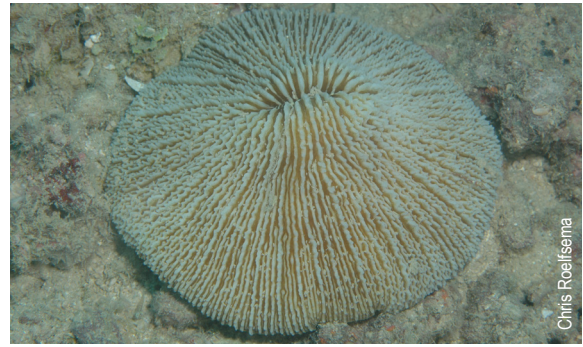
Marine life sighted

CORAL GROWTH FORMS

Free living



Fungiidae sp.



Fungiidae sp.

Digitate



Pocillopora sp.

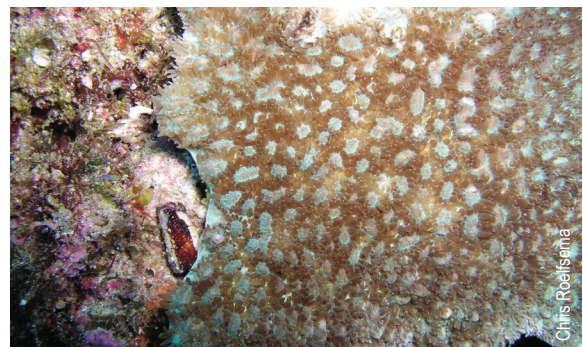


Stylophora sp.

Encrusting



Goniastrea sp.



Hydnophora sp.

Soft



Lobophytum sp.



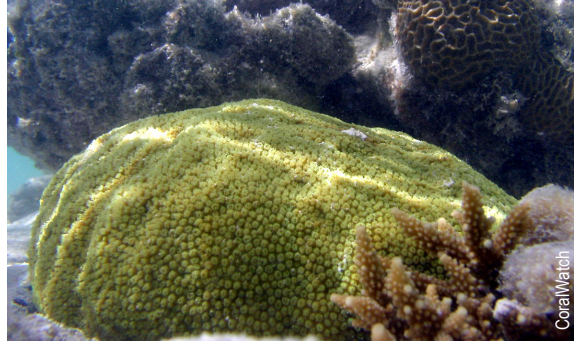
Sarcophyton sp.

CORAL GROWTH FORMS

Boulder (Massive)



Platygyra sp.



Porites sp.

Plate

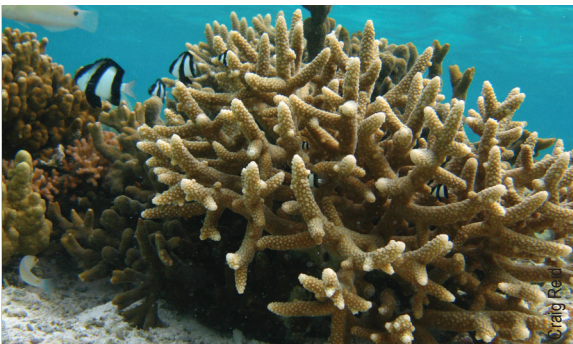


Acropora sp.



Acropora sp.

Branching



Acropora sp.

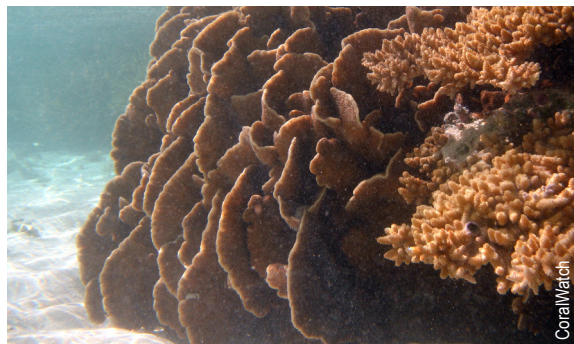


Acropora sp.

Foliaceous



Turbinaria sp.



Pavona sp.