

Identifying coral type using the Coral Health Chart

The **aim** of this activity is to identify coral types using the Coral Health Chart.

ACARA curriculum links

- Science understanding (ACSSU111)
- Science inquiry skills (AC SIS125 & AC SIS126)
- Science as a human endeavour (AC SHE119 & AC SHE223)

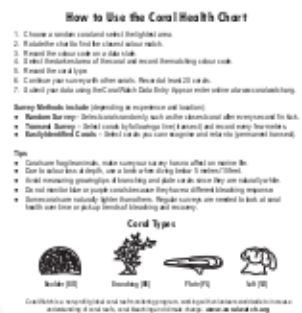
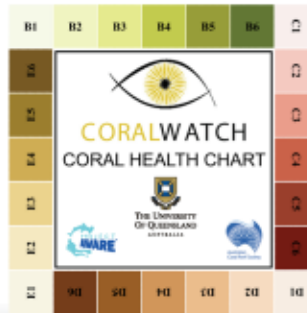


Instructions

- This activity should be conducted at low tide. Check tides timetable and plan this activity accordingly.
- Because identifying coral species is very difficult, CoralWatch classifies coral types in easy identifiable 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 match. If a particular coral is too difficult to classify, just skip this coral and move on to the next one.
- CoralWatch classifies most free living, tabular, encrusting and foliaceous corals as plates.
- CoralWatch classifies most digitate, bushy and staghorn corals as branching.

Equipment

- Booties
- Hat, sunscreen and water bottle
- Coral Health Chart
- Waterproof slate or paper with pencil
- Underwater camera (if available)
- Viewing tube (if available)
- Waterproof ID guide (if available)
- ID reference books (if available)



BOULDER CORAL



BRANCHING CORAL



PLATE CORAL



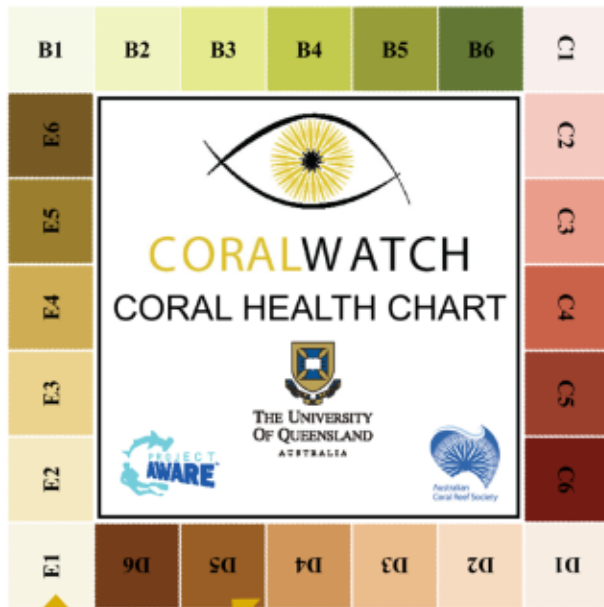
SOFT CORAL



Field Component

CORALWATCH DO IT YOURSELF INSTRUCTIONS

Using the **CORAL HEALTH CHART** is easy



The Coral Health Chart records changes in coral colour, and provides a simple tool for people to monitor coral colour as an indicator of coral health.

Steps to take

1. Choose a random coral and select the lightest area.
2. Rotate the chart to find the closest colour match.
3. Record the colour code on a data slate.
4. Select the darkest area of the coral and record the matching colour code.
5. Record the coral type.
6. Continue your survey with other corals. Record at least 20 corals.
7. Submit your data using the CoralWatch Data Entry Apps or enter online at www.coralwatch.org.



Bleached branching coral
Colour code: E1
Coral type: Branching (BR)



Healthy branching coral
Colour code: D5
Coral type: Branching (BR)

Avoid measuring growing tips of branching and plate corals since they are naturally white. Do not monitor blue or purple corals because they have a different bleaching response. It's simple; only choose corals with colours that approximately match the chart.

CORAL TYPES - just 4 to choose from

Coral types are described by the overall shape (growth form) of coral colonies. Using the Coral Health Chart select the following four coral types or record what you think is the closest.



Boulder (BO)

Any massive or rounded coral, such as some *Porites* species.



Branching (BR)

Any branching coral, such as some *Acropora* species.



Plate (PL)

Any plate-like shape coral, such as tabular *Acropora* species.



Soft (SO)

Any corals lacking a hard skeleton, such as *Sarcophyton* species.



CORAL GROWTH FORMS

FREE LIVING



Fungiidae sp.



Fungiidae sp.

DIGITATE



Acropora sp.

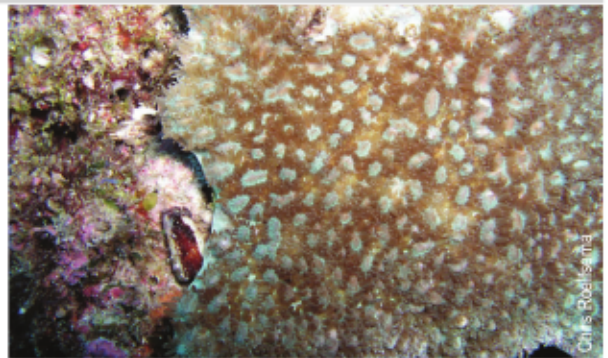


Pocillopora sp.

ENCRUSTING



Goniastrea sp.



Hydnophora sp.

SOFT



Lobophytum sp.



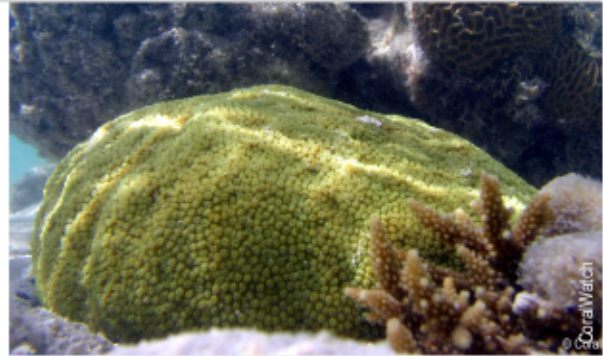
Sarcophyton sp.

CORAL GROWTH FORMS

BOULDER (MASSIVE)



Platygyra sp.



Porites sp.

PLATE



Acropora sp.



Acropora sp.

BRANCHING

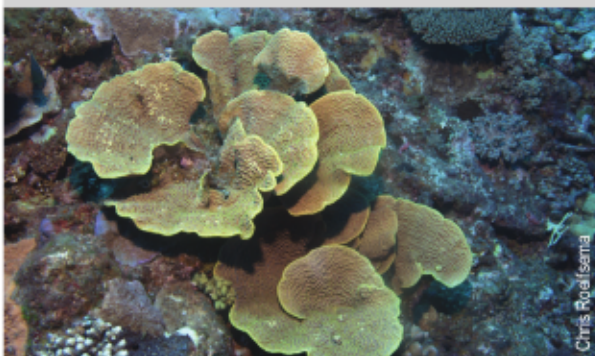


Acropora sp.



Acropora sp.

FOLIACEOUS



Turbinaria sp.



Pavona sp.

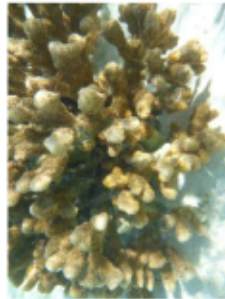
Common coral genera of Heron Island Reef Flat



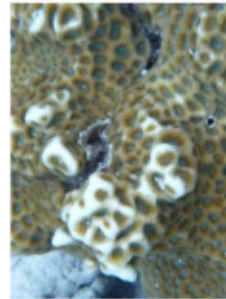
Acropora



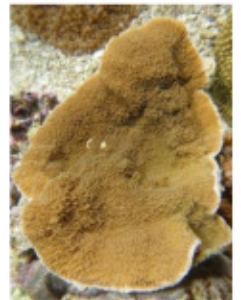
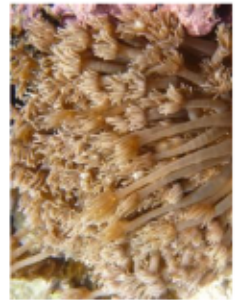
Isopora



Favites



Goniopora



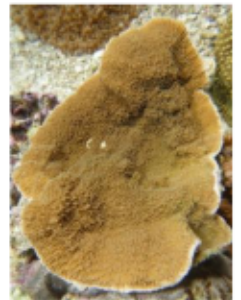
Stylopora



Porites



Montipora



Identifying coral type using the Coral Health Chart

CoralWatch



Branching (BR)



Boulder (BO)



Plate (PL)



Soft (SO)

The Coral Health Chart uses four coral types to classify corals. **Branching** refers to any branching coral, such as Acropora and Pocillopora species. **Boulder** refers to any massive or rounded corals, such as brain corals and 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, e.g. Sarcophytum species.

Instructions

1. Copy the coral type template on a waterproof slate.
2. Locate a coral colony, observe it and record the coral type. 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? Use your coral ID card.

CORAL TYPES	
Branching	Boulder
Plate	Soft