



FACTSHEET

Coral Reefs



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Habitat type: Coral Reefs

Habitat description:

Rottnest Island is a temperate environment and is unusual because it has reefs built by tropical corals like the ones found in the warmer northern parts of Western Australia on the Ningaloo reef.

The reason Rottnest's unique coral reefs form is because of the Leeuwin Current, making Rottnest home to the most southern outcrop of tropical coral. The Leeuwin Current brings warm water and coral spawn from tropical areas down the coast, creating warmer temperatures which are suitable for the spawn to settle and build coral reefs.

Tropical corals and fish occur in most areas around Rottnest with Parker Point, Little Salmon Bay and Salmon Bay especially rich in species.

Rottnest Island is home to 25 species of coral. Pinkish and brownish branching Cauliflower Coral of the *Pocillopora* sub-family can be commonly seen. Brain Coral and Plate Coral are also noticeably present.

The more unusual pale green Mound Coral and dark blue Bushy Acropora Coral are beautiful additions to Salmon Bay.

Coral reefs are a habitat filled with colour from the corals themselves and many other marine animals they support. The many nooks, crannies and caves provide a base for algae and molluscs as well as providing protection for crustaceans and fish.

The coral polyps themselves are food for some like the Parrotfish. Western Rock Lobsters live under the coral ledges while fish like the Butterflyfish, Sergeant Major and King, Moon, and Red Wrasse swim around and over the reef. The brilliant blue of the Western Blue Devils flash in cave entrances and brightly coloured or perfectly camouflaged Nudibranchs move along the reef feeding on the coral.

Conservation Status:

The waters around Rottnest Island are a designated Marine Reserve. Also, some parts of Rottnest' coral reefs are included the Marine Sanctuary Zones shown in the *Rottnest Island Marine Management Strategy (2007)*.



Local species:

Bushy Acropora (*Acropora selago*), Velvet Coral (*Montipora mollis*), Cauliflower Coral (*Pocillopora damicornis*), Pagoda Coral (*Turbinaria mesenterina*), Yellow Scroll Coral (*Turbinaria reniformis*), Yellow Cup Coral (*Turbinaria frondens*), Brown Cup Coral (*Turbinaria peltata*), Brain Coral (*Goniastrea australensis*), Star Coral (*Goniastrea aspera*, *Goniastrea palauensis*), Small Knob Coral (*Plesiastrea versipora*), Lesser Knob Coral (*Cyphastrea serailia*), No common name (*Barabattoia amicum*), Head Coral (*Favia fava*), Brain Coral (*Favites russelli*, *Favites flexuosa*), Larger Star Coral (*Favites abdita*), Moon/Pineapple/Star Coral (*Favites complanata*), Brain Coral (*Symphyllia wilsoni*), Doughnut Coral (*Scolymia australis*), Flowerpot coral (*Alveopora fenestrata*, *Goniopora pendulus*), Mound Coral (*Porites lutea*), No common name (*Coscinaraea mcneilli*), Wrinkle Coral (*Coscinaraea marshae*), Sergeant Major (*Abudefduf vaigiensis*), Blue-barred Orange Parrotfish (*Scarus ghobban*), Green-finned Parrotfish (*Scarus sordidus*), Western Rock Lobster (*Panulirus cygnus*), Truncate Coralfish (*Chelmonops truncates*), Western

Butterflyfish (*Chaetodon assarius*), Moon Wrasse (*Thalassoma lunare*), King Wrasse (*Coris auricularis*), Red Wrasse (*Pseudolabrus bostockii*), Western Blue Devil (*Paraplesiops meleagris*), Nudibranch (*Chromodoris westraliensis*).

Threats:

On Rottnest Island:

- Human activity (inappropriate boating, fishing and diving practices)
- Pollution
- Climate change causing increased water temperature, low salinity.

DID YOU KNOW?

Corals are actually thousands of individual organisms called polyps. A polyp is made up of tentacles surrounding a mouth which leads to the digestive system inside the animal. Each individual coral polyp occupies a skeletal cup. This cup is called a corallite.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Help keep Rottnest's coral reefs healthy. Please don't tread on or touch live corals, be careful of your fins! Don't collect coral to take it home.

