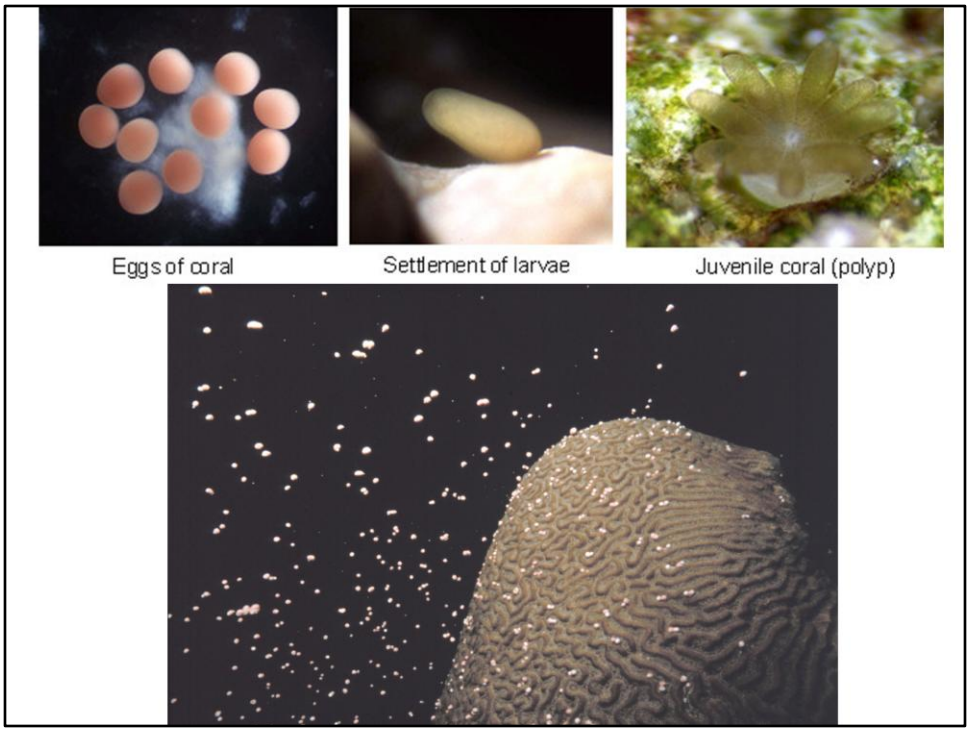

Home. We all have different ideas about what that word means. Let's take a trip to the ocean and see what home means to one type of animal – a coral. Enjoy the beauty, wonder, and lavish abundance that is a coral reef.

Resources for further Biblical reflection, study, and action on this topic can be found on the A Rocha Kenya Marine Conservation and Research Programme's faith and marine conservation webpage. http://www.arocha.org/ke-en/work/research/marine/faith.html

photo credit: Robert Sluka




Corals are animals. The adults are fixed to the bottom of the sea and usually live in colonies of many hundreds or thousands of individuals that grow in different shapes and sizes. The young, however, are very different. For most species, the eggs are released into the water and float with the ocean currents for many months. So, home for young corals is very different from adult corals, and the young are adapted to a wandering, three-dimensional, ever-changing home. They must float until they eventually sense the right sort of home for life as an adult. Then they begin to change so that they can survive, grow, and eventually start the cycle all over again.

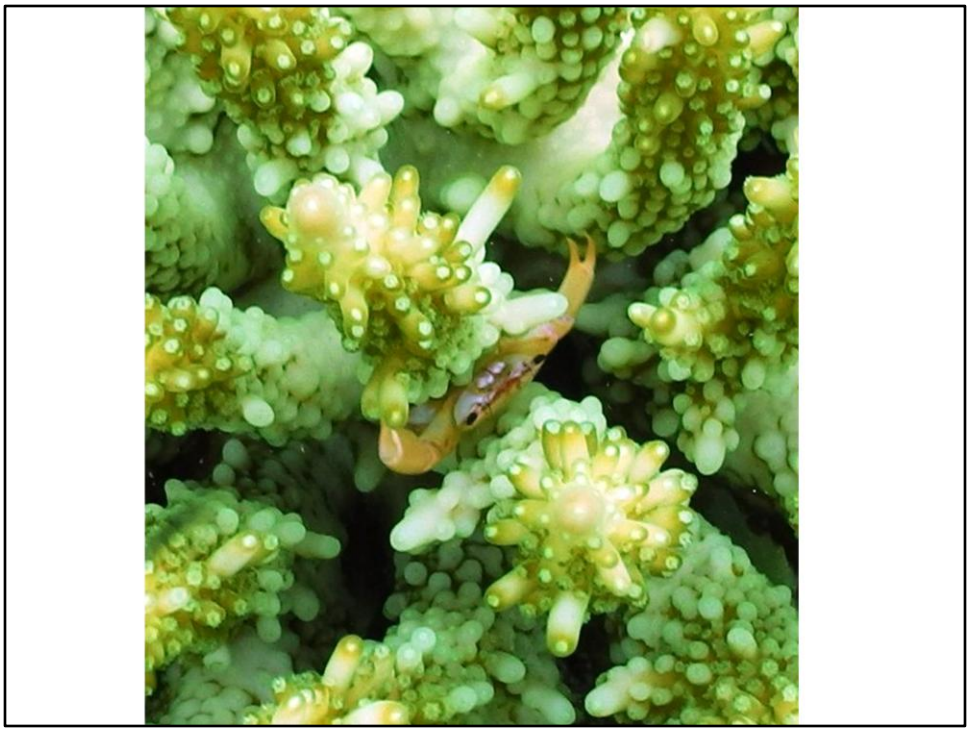
photo credit: coral with eggs - NOAA, Emma Hickerson, top three pictures- http://www.amsl.or.jp/eng/body15.html

When animals and plants have to compete for space with other species, they often grow into a huge variety of forms and colours – and this is true of corals. They come in all shapes, sizes, and colours. An adult coral's home becomes fixed and it starts to grow, dependent upon its relationship with an algae in its flesh that converts sunlight into food. Does your home sometimes get too hot or too cold? Corals are very sensitive to their home's temperature, and also to the acidity, and clarity of the water around them.

photo credit: Matt Brandon www.thedigitaltrekker.com

Jesus told the parable of a mustard seed in Matthew 13:30-32. Had he been a marine biologist during his life on earth, he might have told the story of the coral. The Kingdom of God is like coral - a small, seed-like beginning that grows so that even crabs and fish find a home among their branches.

photo credit: Robert Sluka, robertdsluka.blogspot.com



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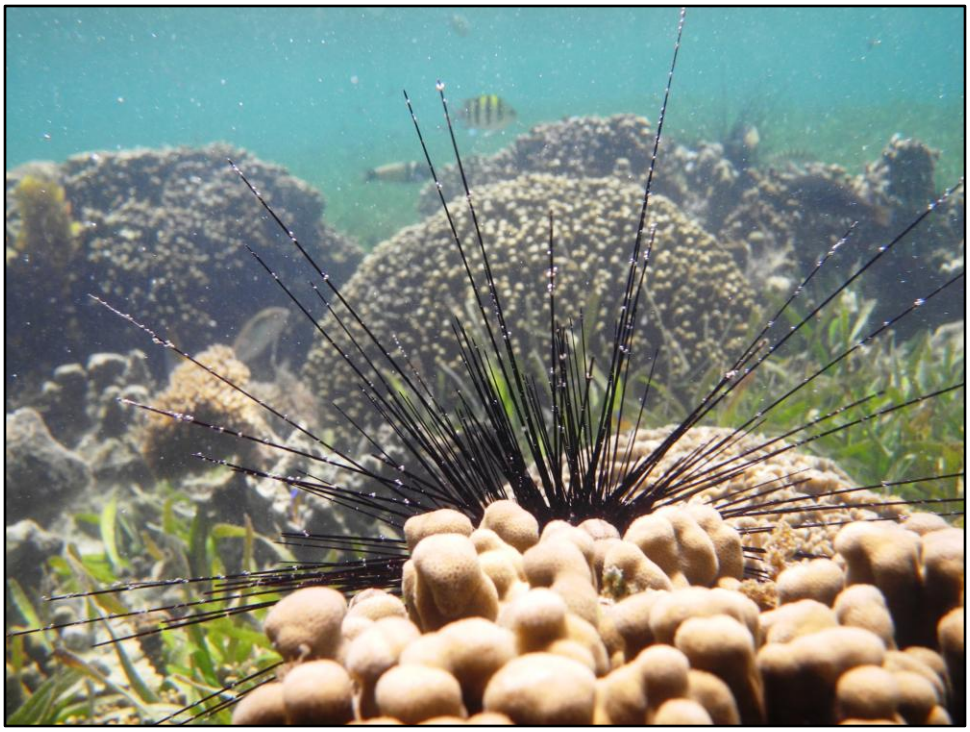
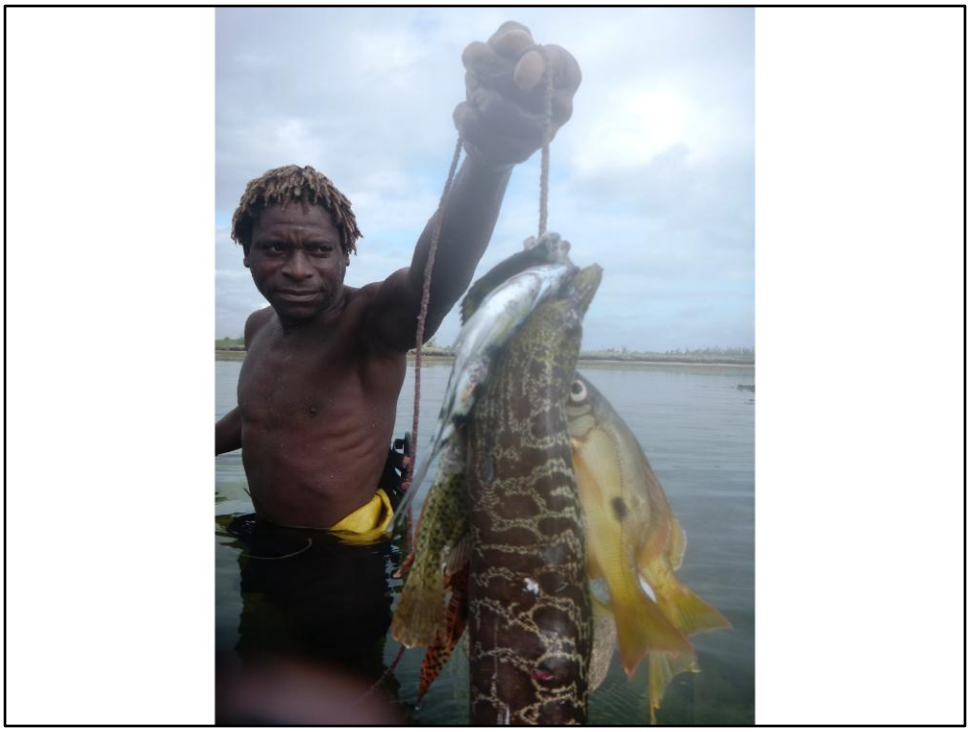


Many corals find their home in one place which can develop into a coral reef. The biodiversity – or variety of kinds of living things - in these reefs is staggering. Species from most major groups of animals and plants found on our planet make their home in and among the structure provided by corals.

photo credit: Benjamin Cowburn



Millions of people live along coastlines where coral reefs are found. The coral reef can help protect the homes of these people, by breaking up large ocean waves, and slowing down the wearing away (erosion) of the soil along the shore. Coral reefs also provide food for our tables and enjoyment and inspiration.

photo credit: Benjamin Cowburn

This photo shows the results of bomb fishing in Sabah (Borneo). This area of the world is the centre of biodiversity for coral reefs. Overfishing and poverty have caused fishers to turn to harmful methods of fishing in order to provide food for their families. The corals have died, the place they called home destroyed, and the home they made for others gone. Researchers from Sabah and the UK are now working to provide a new home for corals to live on, the structure in the photo. Hopefully this is the beginning of a new coral reef that can once again be home for the abundant, lavish, teeming life that Genesis 1 tells us is God's good plan for the ocean.

photo credit – Matt Brandon www.thedigitaltrekker.com

For more information on this project, you can go to www.sempornaislandsproject.com

More study and research is necessary to understand how corals make their homes, and how what we do as people can either damage their home or help corals to thrive.

A Rocha Kenya has started coral reef research and conservation projects that focus on understanding how corals make their homes, what activities destroy or damage these homes, and what we can do to help them thrive in their home.

photo credit: Robert Sluka

A Rocha's coral research and conservation projects in Kenya focus on Watamu Marine National Park – East Africa's oldest marine protected area. Marine parks protect biodiversity and also allow us to see more clearly what God might have meant in Genesis 1 about the oceans teeming and swarming with life. This ocean life flows out of the park and replenishes other areas that people can use for feeding themselves.

Learn more about A Rocha Kenya's coral projects at www.arocha.org/ke-en/work/research/marine.html

photo credit: Robert Sluka

Home – a view from the reef is quite different to our experience and yet … is it really that different?