

BIOLOGY AND MOLLUSCS OF CORAL REEFS

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Coral reefs are complex, biogenic marine environments. Despite occupying only 0.1 % of the earth's surface, they are of great geographic, geologic, ecologic and economic importance, mainly because of their high productivity and high biodiversity. I will describe 1) the geographic distribution of coral reefs, 2) the biology of the major reef-building organisms, 3) the origin and different kinds of coral reefs, and 4) the diversity of invertebrate life on coral reefs, with emphasis on their molluscan faunas. Molluscs have many trophic roles on coral reefs. Suspension feeders on small particles include *Tridacna*, which also farms zooxanthellae and thus contributes to both to primary productivity and to sequestering its products within the reef. Herbivores include abalones, *Strombus* and their relatives. Detritivores include cerithiid and turritellid gastropods. The predominant carnivores are the Caenogastropoda and cephalopods. Many of the predatory molluscs of coral reefs are quite specialized, and knowledge of their trophic roles helps to understand the organization and functioning of these most complex biotic communities of the marine environment.