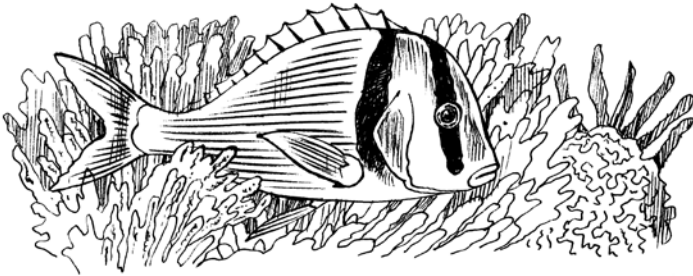


The Great Barrier Reef



Come with me on an adventure along Australia's east coast, where you will visit many places of interest, including the only living object that can be seen from the moon - The Great Barrier Reef - (G.B.R.). Our God has created a place of absolute wonder that has been built by billions of small sea creatures called polyps. Their underwater garden is more colourful than any garden you have seen on the earth. In addition to the 400 species of polyps, there are over 2,500 categories of fish and 200 bird varieties living about the reef. Further studies tell us that there are about 400 categories of molluscs, 15 species of snakes and 500 varieties of seaweed. Just as the reef has innumerable colours, so do the creatures that live about the reef. For a moment imagine a multicoloured field of flowers of many shapes and sizes. Do you see them swaying in the breeze?

God's underwater garden is even more colourful! The small polyps have made a reef, rich in colour, which gently sways about in the tidal movements. And swimming about the coral are fish of a multitude of colours.

Many proud people spend a lot of money buying the best

and most colourful clothes, to make them stand out in the crowd. Their hope is to hear favourable comments about what they are wearing. However, the Lord has something to say about this - ‘... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: They neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these’ (Matthew 6: 25 - 29).

Australia’s G.B.R stretches over two thousand kilometres along the coast of northern New South Wales and Queensland. Marine scientists tell us that in addition to the underwater reef there are more than one thousand coral islands.

As the G.B.R. wends its way through the warm waters, we read that it is between sixty and one hundred and sixty kilometres from the coastline, except at Cape Tribulation where the reef comes right to the shoreline.

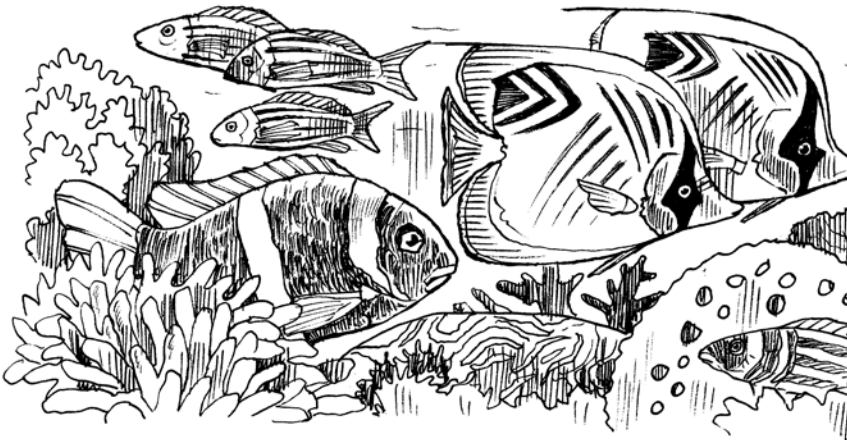
Polyps, the builders of the G.B.R. are sea creatures between 2.5 centimetres and 2.5 metres in diameter, and are usually found in colonies. They are cylindrical in shape and when released by their parent, attach one end of their body to the dead remains of other polyps. One half of their body becomes calcium and so, over the years, the reef gradually grows.

The other end of the polyp is a mouth surrounded by tentacles that wave about in the moving water searching for food - usually tiny fish. There is one polyp type that attracts a single cell algae, that buries itself in the polyp’s body. It then assists the polyp make limestone and food.

I haven't the space to name the many polyps, but one is the mushroom coral. It was given this name because it looks like the underside of a mushroom. Some other coral looks like small trees, and there is brain coral, so named because its appearance is similar to the human brain. Many corals are soft while others are solid. The 'fern coral' looks lovely with its many fronds, but unlike the ferns in our gardens, it is solid!

The coral reproduction is most unusual. The polyps grow small knobs called 'buds' which are filled with eggs and sperm, ready to be released at the same moment. If you were underwater when the 'buds' burst open you would see what has been called an underwater, coloured snowstorm. This happens during either November or December, according to the time of the full moon.

The fertilised eggs float to the surface of the sea where they are moved about by wind and tide, before sinking to the ocean floor, or to the existing coral where the next generation of coral is formed.



The Australian Government has established the 'Great Barrier Reef Marine Park,' which is responsible for ensuring the reef maintains its pristine condition. When you visit the reef please take care not to damage it in any way. If you want to learn more about the reef, buy or borrow 'The Great Barrier Reef,' published in 1999 by The Australian Geographic Pty. Ltd. It has 155 pages of information about the G.B.R. There are many pictures that show the vibrant colours of the corals and fish.

The best builder of everything in the universe is God. We are plainly told that all things were created through the 'Word' who is God's Son, the Lord Jesus: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that has been made' (John 1: 1-3).

Our God is a majestic builder-God!

