

# Respecting Coral Reefs

We all have a role to play in preserving and protecting Hawai'i's coral reefs. Hawai'i's reefs provide a home for over 7,000 species of marine plants and animals, 25% of which are unique to Hawai'i. Healthy coral reefs are important to all Hawai'i residents and visitors. Please do your part to care for Hawai'i's reefs.

## Corals Are Alive

Corals are living animals that eat, grow and reproduce. They provide food and shelter for fish and other marine life. As a swimmer, snorkeler or diver, you can easily damage living coral by touching, kicking and stepping on it. It only takes seconds to damage a reef, but it may take decades for it to recover. You can help protect Hawai'i's corals by viewing the reef from a distance.



A close-up of individual coral animals, or polyps. Corals are close relatives of sea anemones and jellyfishes.

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Standing on the reef as shown here can damage and even kill the living animals.



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## Fish Don't Need Feeding

Fish feeding has been shown to alter the natural community structure of the reef, and promote aggressive behavior in fishes. Please allow the fishes to eat their natural food... many of them play an important role as grazers, keeping seaweed growth in check. Help the reef and stay safe; please leave the fish food at home.



Surgeonfishes are important grazers on the reef.

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Feeding fishes can result in bite wounds such as this.



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## Respect Marine Life

Please enjoy marine wildlife from a distance. Animals such as turtles, dolphins and monk seals may be very sensitive to human disturbance, and are protected by law. Never handle, chase, or harass any type of marine life. Please respect them and their habitat. Keep your distance and take photos rather than souvenirs.



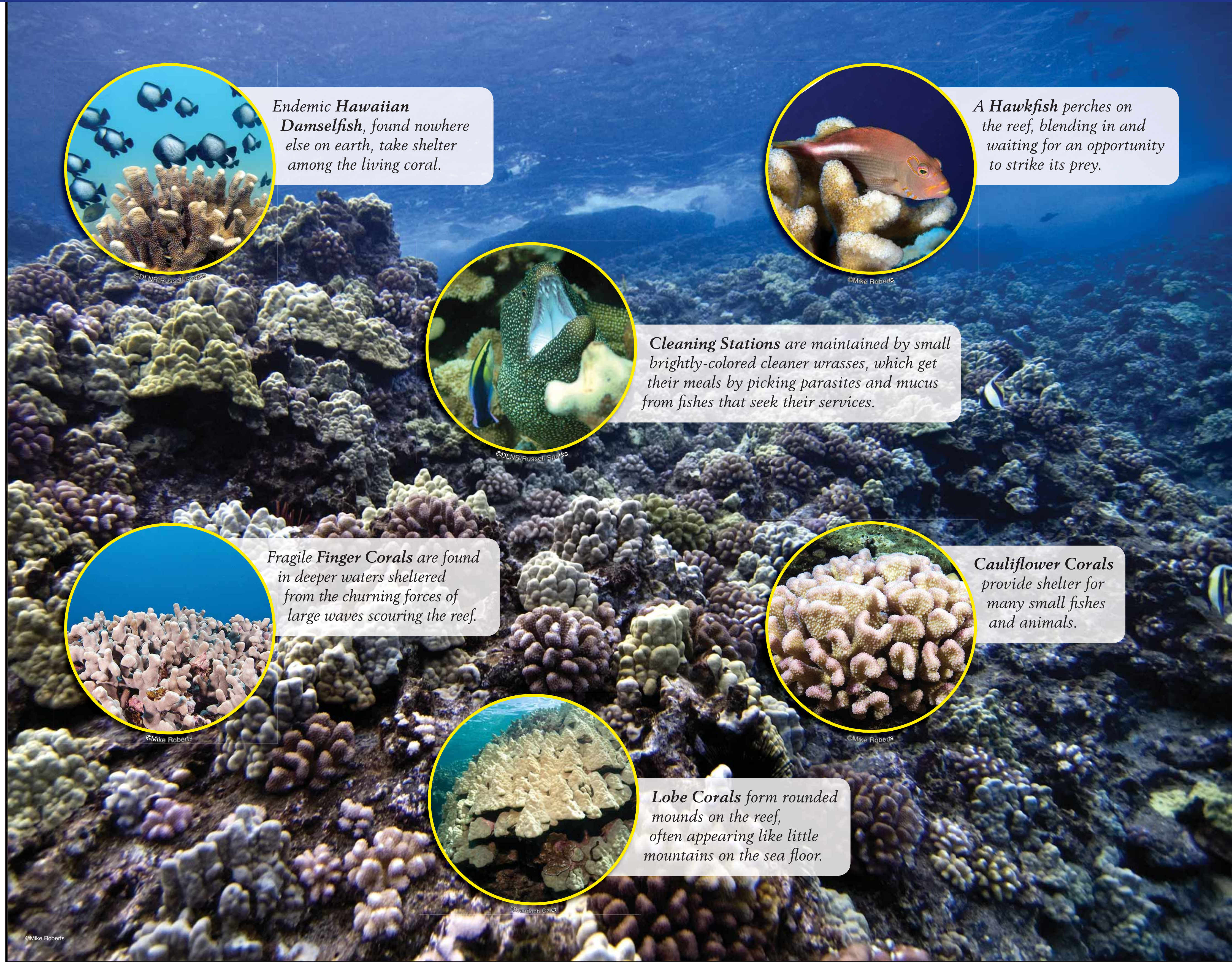
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Please give turtles and other marine life plenty of room.

This type of harassment disrupts the animals' natural behavior, and can affect their ability to rest, feed, and reproduce.



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Endemic Hawaiian Damsel fish, found nowhere else on earth, take shelter among the living coral.

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A Hawkfish perches on the reef, blending in and waiting for an opportunity to strike its prey.

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Cleaning Stations are maintained by small brightly-colored cleaner wrasses, which get their meals by picking parasites and mucus from fishes that seek their services.

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Fragile Finger Corals are found in deeper waters sheltered from the churning forces of large waves scouring the reef.

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Cauliflower Corals provide shelter for many small fishes and animals.

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Lobe Corals form rounded mounds on the reef, often appearing like little mountains on the sea floor.

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