

WHO EATS WHAT?

CORAL REEF FOOD CHAINS



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CHAPTER 1

RAIN FORESTS OF THE SEA

Coral reefs are one of the planet's most diverse and beautiful **biomes**. They are found in warm, shallow ocean waters.



Coral reefs make up less than 0.2 percent of the ocean floor. But nearly a third of the ocean's plants and animals live there. This is why they are called "rain forests of the sea."

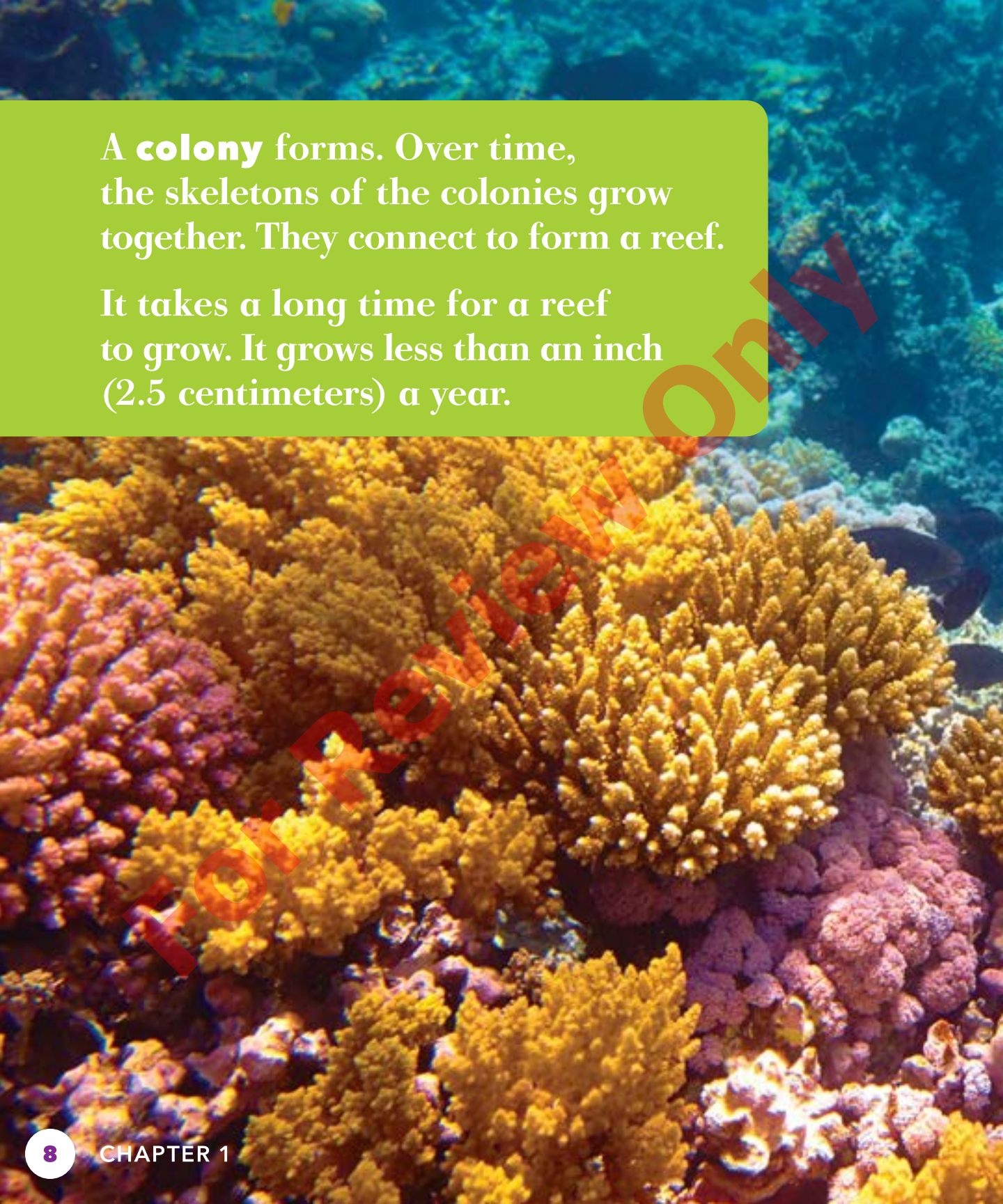


coral polyp





A coral reef begins with a single animal. A **coral polyp** sticks to a rock. It surrounds itself with a hard skeleton. Then it splits into many polyps. Each has its own skeleton.

A vibrant underwater scene featuring a diverse coral reef. In the foreground, there are large, branching coral structures in shades of yellow and orange. To the left, there are smaller, more rounded coral formations in pink and purple hues. The background shows a deep blue water column with more distant coral and a few small fish swimming. A semi-transparent green box with white text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

A **colony** forms. Over time, the skeletons of the colonies grow together. They connect to form a reef.

It takes a long time for a reef to grow. It grows less than an inch (2.5 centimeters) a year.

WHERE ARE THEY?

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Coral reefs are found along the coasts of East Africa, South India, Australia, Florida, Brazil, and the Caribbean.



■ = Coral Reefs

