










The Calabash Caye Snorkel Trail

Distance: 300m | Time: ±30 min

-  Mooring: Welcome & Seagrass Stopover
-  1 Destination Restoration
-  2 Fishy Connections
-  3 One Stop Shop & Reef Crest Quest
-  4 Panorama
-  5 Experience Drifting
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Instructions



Snorkel from the boat to the buoys with your guide. Once you arrive at a station, float horizontally on the surface (without using your fins) as you read your guide cards, there is a front and back for each station. Pay attention to the animals and activities mentioned as you swim from buoy to buoy.



Please do not touch coral or wildlife.

When your head is above the water, be careful with where you move your fins. It can take coral up to 10 years to regrow.



Always stay with your guide.

If you get separated, signal to the boat captain or get your guide's attention. Safety is the top priority.

1A

Seagrass Stopover



Did You Know?

Unlike seaweed, seagrasses are flowering marine plants. They're important as nurseries for reef fish, for cleaning seawater and capturing CO₂.



Queen Conch

The conch is a large, herbivorous marine snail and one of the most valuable fisheries resources for Belize.

Snakelocks Anemone

Anemones are predators that feed on small fish and crustaceans, but they will also form symbiotic relationships with some fish that live among their tentacles. This is actually what the coral animal (polyp) looks like - soft and with tentacles.



Southern Stingray

Stingrays belong to the same subclass as sharks. They feed on crustaceans buried in the sand and can often be uncovering their prey by flapping their fins. These peaceful animals have barbs in their tails that are used for defense.



- Are seagrass beds important to coral reefs?
YES/NO
- Do you see any animals in the seagrass?
What colors are they and why?

1B

Destination Restoration



Did You Know?

Corals are very sensitive to environmental change (and fin kicks). More than half the corals in the Caribbean have already died due to human impact. We can help repopulate reefs by growing coral fragments in nurseries like this one, and then planting them onto reefs.



Staghorn Coral

Staghorn is an endangered coral found at Turneffe. Once abundant on the reef crests, many died from White Band Disease in the early 80's. They're extremely important for breaking waves and reducing coastal erosion.



Symmetrical Brain Coral

Brain coral is a common reef builder at Turneffe. These massive forms grow slowly, a few mm each year and can live for almost a century.

French Angelfish

French angels are gorgeous and inquisitive inhabitants of the reef. They are thought to have one partner for their entire lives.



- Do you think divers & snorkelers can hurt coral? YES/ NO
- Why staghorn coral for restoration? (hints growth rate, reproduction mode & importance)

2

Fishy Connections

Did You Know?

All fish have adaptations to facilitate their feeding preferences, and the pretty parrotfish is no exception. Their teeth are fused together to form “beaks” that they use to scrape algae off the corals. In doing so, they clean the reef and help corals survive.



Terminal Male Stoplight Parrotfish

This beautiful turquoise male lives in a harem with female stoplights that look quite different (black, white and red). They start life as females and change to males when it becomes necessary. Parrotfish are so important to reef health that it is illegal in Belize to eat them.

Atlantic Trumpetfish

The Trumpetfish is a shy, long and slender fish. It is closely related to other suction feeders like pipefish and seahorses. They are often found among gorgonians, swaying with the currents to lure their prey.



Finger Corals

The finger corals are found in small, discrete, bouquet-like clumps on the reef. Their tentacles are usually extended giving them a fuzzy appearance.



- Are parrotfish protected by law in Belize? YES/NO?
- What do you think would happen to coral reefs if parrotfish disappeared?

3

Reef Crest Quest

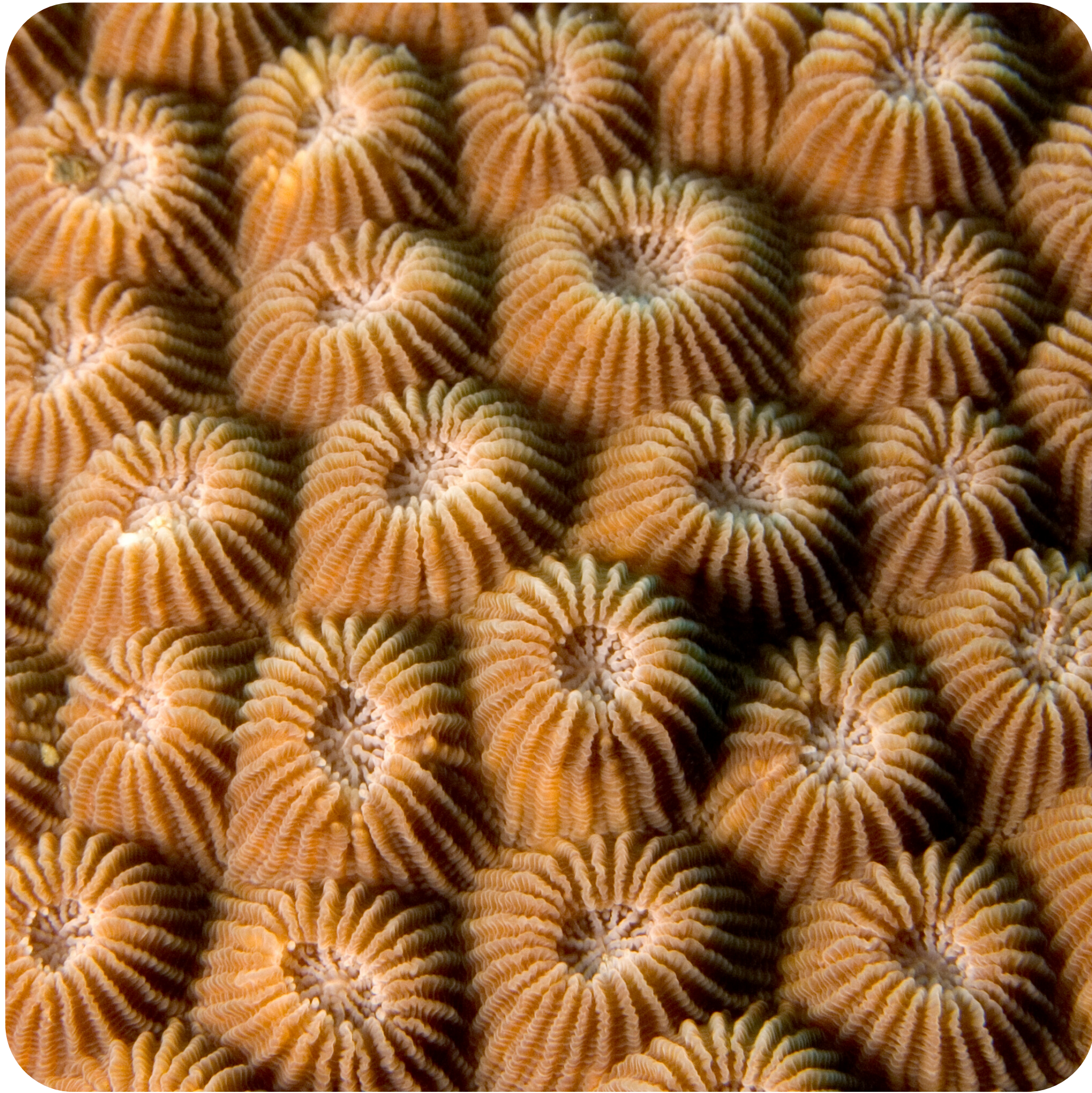
Did You Know?

Hard corals protect our coastlines from high energy waves. Look up the slope of the reef - you can see large, branching corals called Elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*) almost reaching the surface. They are responsible for the calm seas closer to shore.



Elkhorn Coral

These are some of the fastest growing corals in our region at 6 cm per year. Like Staghorn corals, they also once dominated our reef crests but were killed by White Band Disease. These are important structural builders and provide shelter for many species of reef fish.



Great Star Coral

Star coral is another dominant structural builder on Caribbean reefs. Each coral polyp is clearly seen as a little bump on the surface of the coral. If you look closely, you'll see each resembles a tiny star.

Queen Triggerfish

This gorgeous triggerfish loves to eat urchins. They are usually solitary and are fairly shy yet curious animals.



- Is the elkhorn coral important for fish as well? YES/NO
- How do you think these corals help protect our coast?

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One-Stop Shop

Notice how fish gather around coral reefs and generally not in mid water unless they're moving from place to place. There's very little food and shelter in the water column but both can be found within the caves and crevices on coral reefs.

Lettuce Coral



You will swim over “fields” of lettuce coral on the reefs of Turneffe. With their thin blades, they are extremely fragile, so take care not to touch them.

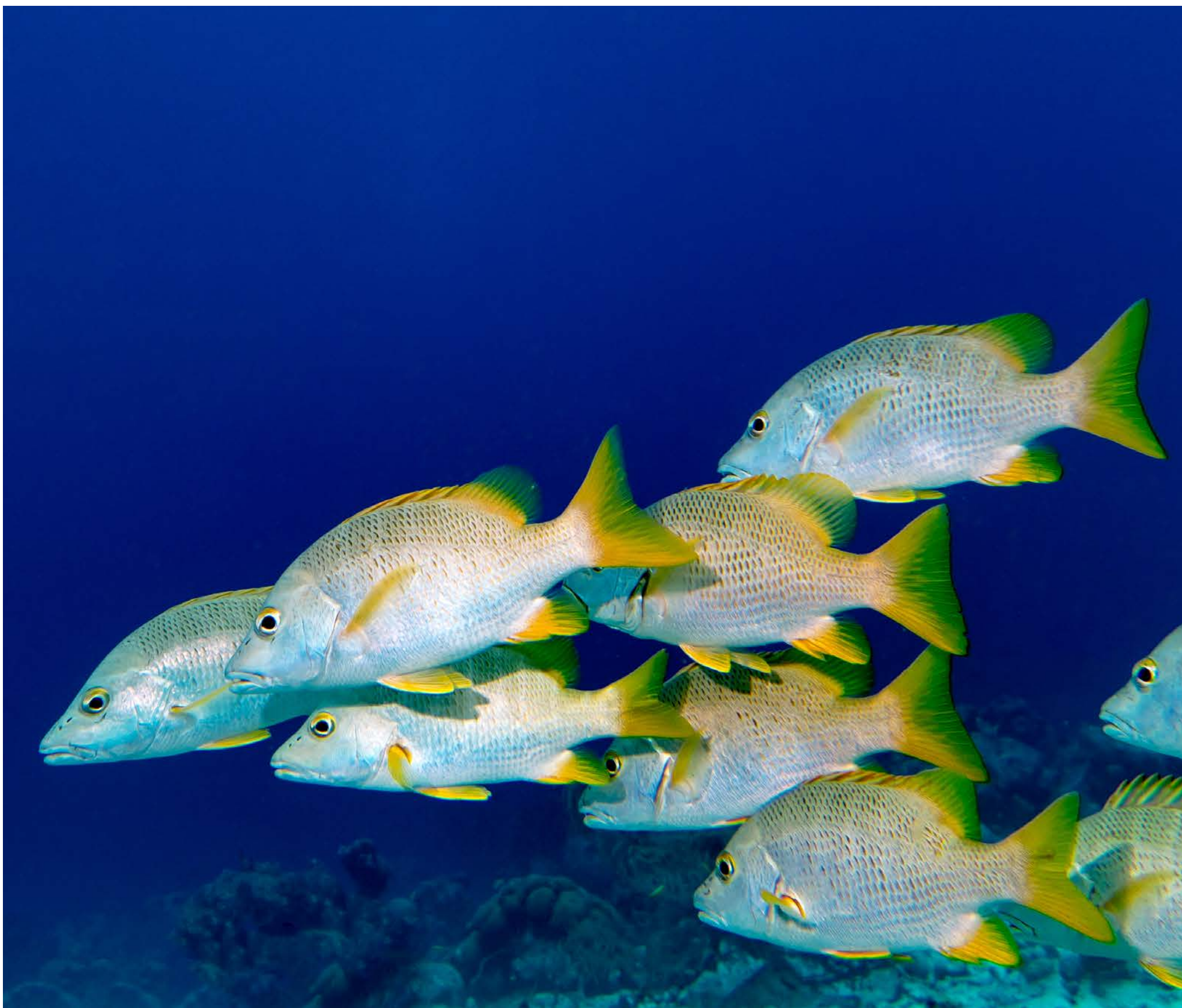
Porkfish

Porkfish, also known as Sweetlips, belong to the family of grunts. They are often seen on our reef during the day even though they are nocturnal.



Schoolmaster Snapper

Schoolmasters are aptly named for their dour expressions. They usually travel in groups during the day for protection but are solitary at night. These snappers are carnivores (look at their sharp teeth) and feed on gastropods and cephalopods.



- Do you think all these fish would be here without coral reefs? YES/NO?
- What type of food do you think is found in the water column?

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Panorama

Sea Fans & Feather Plumes

Both sea fans and feather plumes are called gorgonians. They have solid rods of protein (gorgonin) that allows flexibility.



We're getting deeper, with a wider field of view. Look out for patterns and shapes. See channels of sand with ripples formed by the movement of water, always oriented parallel to shore. Look at the sea fans always facing prevailing currents, so that they can capture as much food as possible.



Mountainous Star Coral

The star corals are framework builders on the reefs of Turneffe. Once abundant, they are now listed as Endangered.

Bicolor Damselfish

These little farmers cultivate small patches of algae which they guard aggressively. They are equally as belligerent when guarding their eggs.



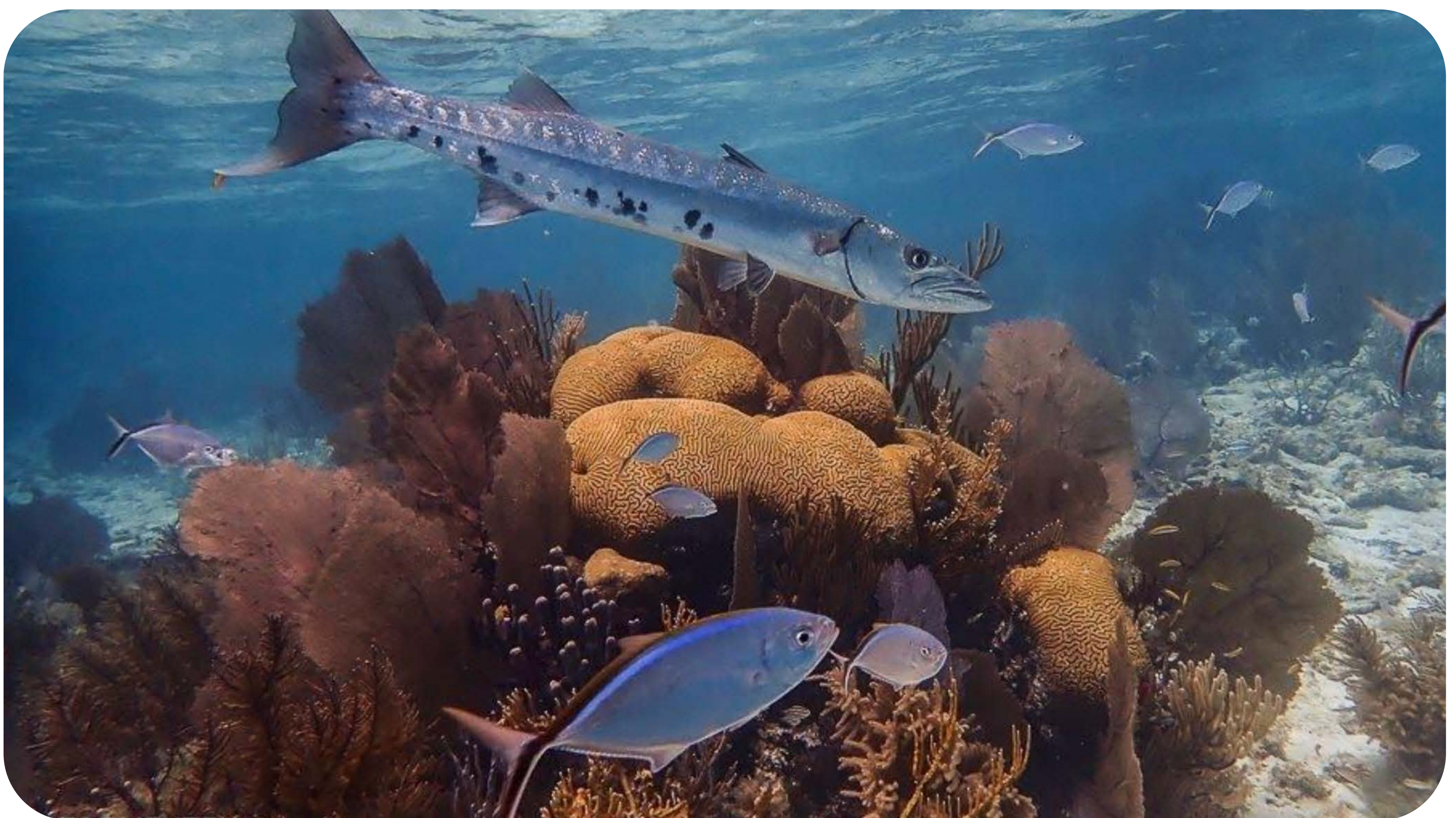
- Are gorgonians corals? YES/NO?
- What direction are you swimming in?
How do you know?

6

Bonus Buoy

A special treat awaits you if you start at buoy 1 and make it out here. The water is slightly deeper, usually clearer and you are more likely to bump into (not literally) the pelagic predators - like horse eye jacks and barracudas.

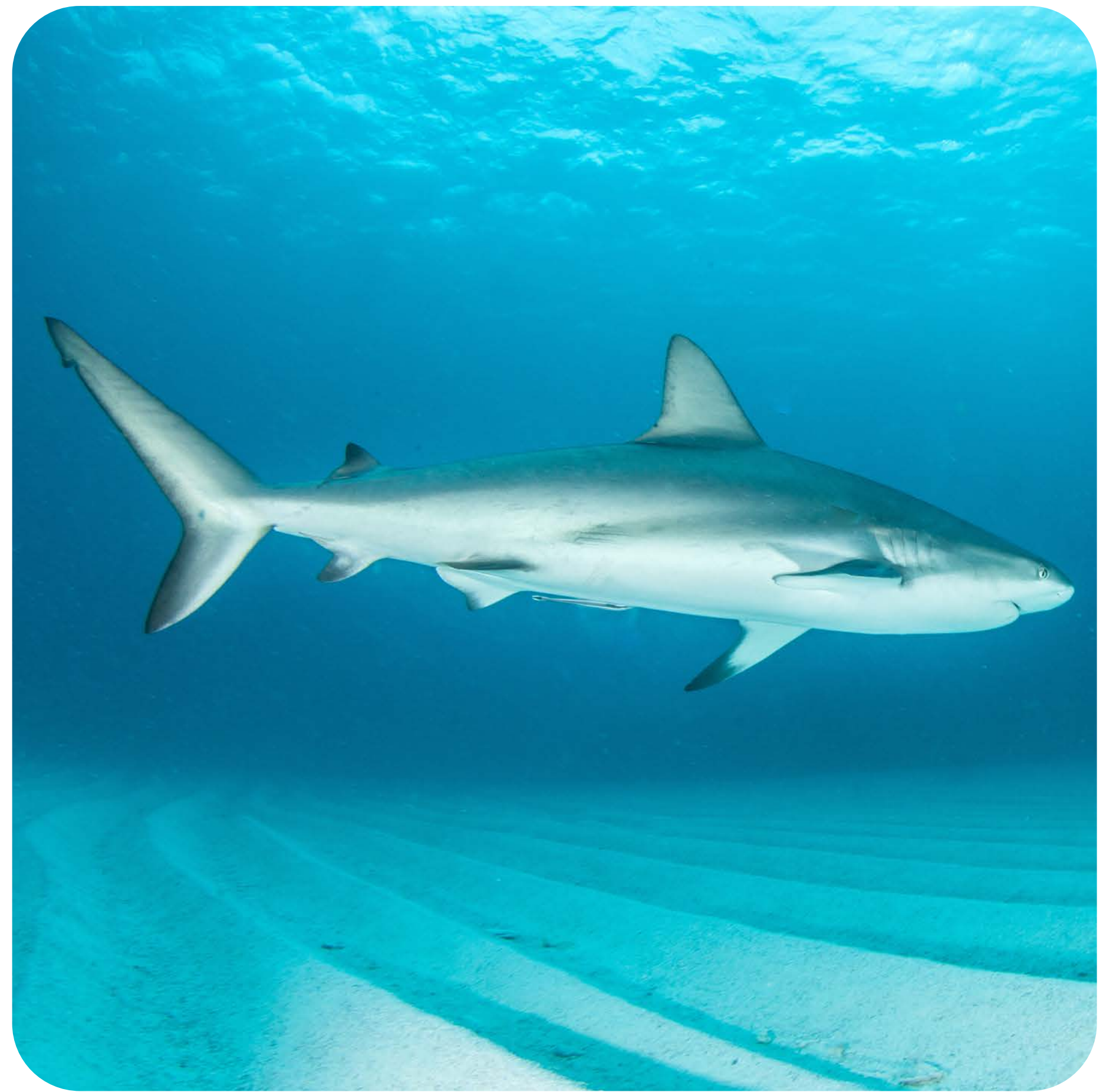
Great Barracuda & Bar Jacks



These two predators are often found hunting around coral reefs, drawn to the abundance of food. Both carnivores, they feed on smaller fish.

Caribbean Reef Shark

This apex predator is a sign of a flourishing reef system, as it means there is adequate food around. They are generally not aggressive towards humans. If you're lucky enough to spot one, stop and admire the prowess of this predator, built for speed and hunting.



Spotted Eagle Ray

Spotted Eagle Rays are regularly encountered along our trail, either gliding peacefully alone or in pairs, or doing flips at the surface.



- Was the movie Jaws based on fact? YES?NO?
- What is the first color to disappear in deeper water? Why?