

# Creep into the Deep: Discovering Deep-Sea Coral

**SEAMAIL™**

TO: Virtual Deep-Sea Science Team  
FROM: Makeda Mills  
SUBJECT: Bacteria and Deep-Sea Coral -- BFFs?

Hello Virtual Science Team,

My name is Makeda Mills. I'm a graduate student at Texas A&M University. I study microbiology. That means I study living things that are too small to see without a microscope.

On this project, I am studying the bacteria that live on the coral reef. I want to know if there are different bacteria in different locations.

Bacteria are an important part of a coral reef. But we know so little about these reefs. We don't know what kinds of bacteria are there or what their jobs are in the community. My work will help us figure that out.

How do I do that? When the team brings up samples of coral, they will set aside some for me to study. I put pieces of coral into small tubes. With some of the pieces, I will study what kinds of bacteria are living on and in the coral. I'll use other samples to count how much bacteria live on and in the corals. I also take samples of the mucus on the outside of the coral. I take all the samples back to the lab, where I'll work to answer all my questions.

All ocean life is important, whether it's big enough to see, like the coral, or so small we need a microscope to find it. That's what makes my work so interesting.

Better get back to sorting the coral samples. Talk to you soon,

Makeda

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Illustration by Paul Lopez