

Creep into the Deep: Discovering Deep-Sea Coral

SEAMAIL™

TO: Virtual Deep-Sea Science Team
FROM: Laura Anthony
SUBJECT: How Books took me to the Deep Sea!

Hello Virtual Science Team,

My name is Laura Anthony. I am a PhD student at Florida State University.

I've been interested in deep-sea corals ever since I was a kid. I decided when I was 8 years old that I wanted to be a marine biologist. My dad wanted to help and bought me books about the ocean. In one of the books, I saw a page about deep-sea coral. I learned that people don't know very much about them. I thought I might want to help discover more.

In college my wish finally came true. I am studying deep-sea corals as I work on my PhD degree. The thing I am most interested in learning more about is how these corals reproduce. This is a fancy word that means making more of themselves.

I also want to learn about baby coral (which are called larvae). Unlike adult coral, larvae aren't stuck in one place. I want to know where they move to before they stick themselves down and start building their own tiny skeletons. Do they stay near their parents? Or do they float somewhere and start a whole new reef?

When I'm at sea, I'll be collecting samples of coral to take back to the lab. I'll also be helping with the ROV dives. I take notes and help tell the pilots where to guide the ROV Jason to find coral or to get a closer look if we see something interesting.

My favorite time on the ship is watching the images from the ROV as it moves through the water. One time we were watching the video from the ROV. Suddenly we saw a whole wall of coral and sponges—bigger than two SUVs! It was breathtaking!

Between ROV dives, I also really love to hang out with the people on the ship too. Everyone has such interesting stories to tell.

Better get back to the lab!

Laura

Laura Anthony
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Illustration by Paul Lopez

Have you ever read a book about a topic or career that made you want to learn more? What was it about? I hope you get to learn more about it and someday make it your career!