

Creep into the Deep: Discovering Deep-Sea Coral

SEAMAIL™

TO: Virtual Deep-Sea Science Team
FROM: Dr. Katie Shamberger
SUBJECT: My Role in the Research

Hello Virtual Science Team,

My part of the project is to look at something we call ocean acidification. That's a big word that just means the water is getting more acidic than it used to be. When ocean water gets more acidic, it makes it very hard for animals like clams and corals to build their shells and skeletons .

The water in most of our study areas is not ideal for corals to build their skeletons. But they are living there anyway! There must be more to learn about how these corals live and build their skeletons.

We started one experiment during our cruise a year ago. The goal is to try to answer some of our questions. We took chunks of coral skeleton and weighed and measured them. Then we put them in the water near the reefs and left them down there for a year.

On this trip, we pulled the coral chunks up, excited to see how they changed. There were little brittle stars all over the blocks! We looked at the blocks closely. We didn't see any major differences. To be sure, we will study the pieces more in the lab. This will help us understand how the water is affecting the coral skeleton.

We will also look at how fast the reef is growing. As I learn more, I want to be able predict what might happen to these reefs in the future. I hope this information will help us protect them.

Talk to you soon.

Katie

Dr. Karie Shamberger
Deep-Sea Explorer
WhaleTimes.org



FLORIDA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Illustration by Paul Lopez

Why do you think the brittle stars were on the coral skeletons?