

Sea Carnival

Corals and anemones, together with jellyfish, make up the phylum Cnidaria. Some characteristics they share are their bright colors, tentacles that secrete stinging substances, and a digestive system with a common opening for ingestion and excretion—the simplest digestive system in the animal kingdom. All of these organisms are quite simple. Corals generally form colonies, large groups of small polyps that stay practically immobile and feed on microorganisms brought to them by water currents. Sea anemones, on the other hand, are solitary and can trap prey despite their limited locomotion. ●



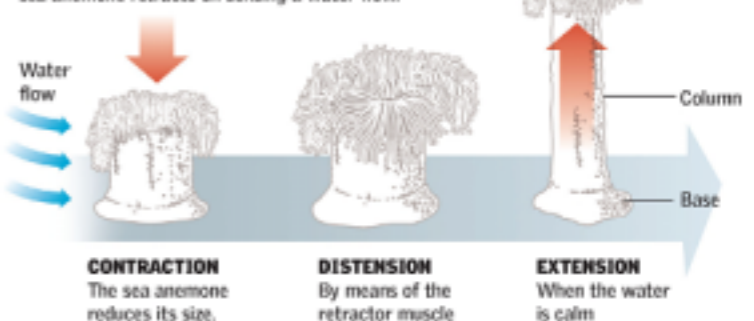
CORAL POLYP

Beautiful but Deadly

Beautiful for their shapes and colors that vary even within the same species, and dangerous for the poison they use to sting both victims and predators, sea anemones live in almost all marine latitudes, and at varying depths. Tropical marine anemones can measure up to 3 feet (1 m). They have a basal disc, which allows some species to attach to rocks, and others to slither, and still others to penetrate the seafloor. They trap live prey, even fish, with the many tentacles around their mouths.

ADAPTATION OF SHAPE

To avoid being swept away in the current, the sea anemone retracts on sensing a water flow.

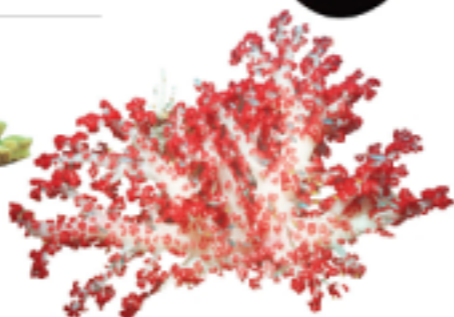


Coral Reefs

Corals are small polyps with tentacles that grow at their base throughout their life, generating a calcareous exoskeleton. This skeleton forms masses, or branches. Most corals grow in colonies; the skeletons form huge calcareous masses called reefs. Corals live mostly in warm, shallow ocean waters. Their reproduction can be both sexual and asexual, by division or by gemmation. They feed on plankton.



HARD CORALS grow over the surface of the lime-bearing substrate.



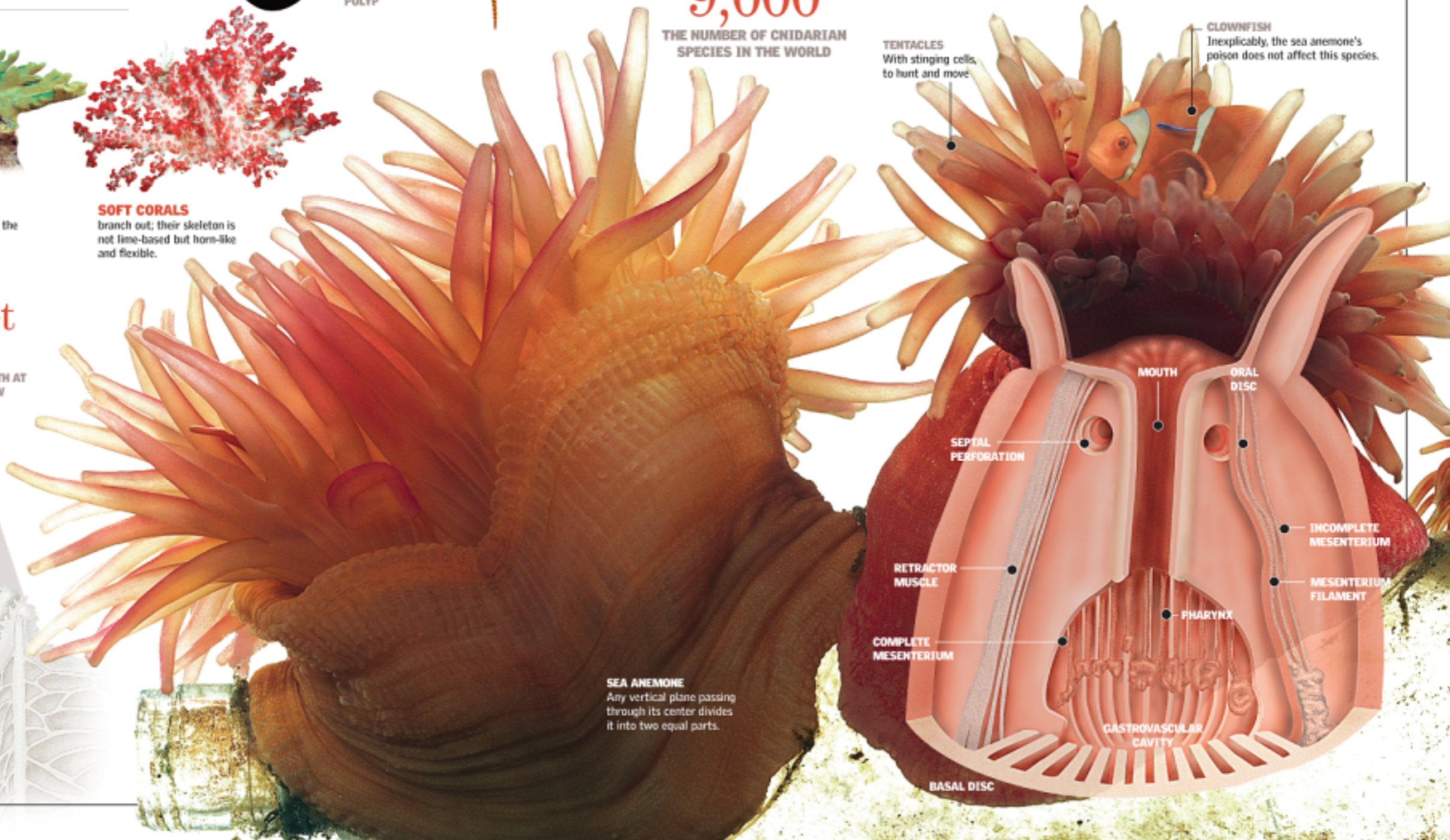
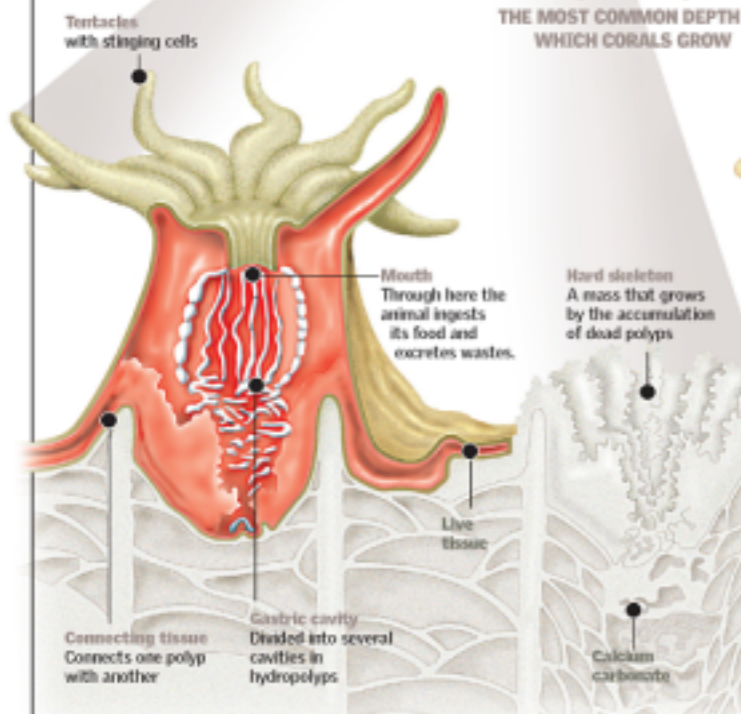
SOFT CORALS branch out; their skeleton is not lime-based but horn-like and flexible.

9,000
THE NUMBER OF CNIDARIAN SPECIES IN THE WORLD

CORAL WALLS

Even though some coral walls live alone, most form colonies that can grow upward at up to 3 feet (1 m) every year.

100 feet
(30 m)
THE MOST COMMON DEPTH AT WHICH CORALS GROW



TENTACLES With stinging cells, to hunt and move.

CLOWNFISH Inexplicably, the sea anemone's poison does not affect this species.

SEA ANEMONE Any vertical plane passing through its center divides it into two equal parts.

