

Coral Reefs

Coral reefs play a very important role in the ecology of Biscayne Bay, even though they are not located inside the bay itself. Coral reefs are found along the southern outskirts of Biscayne Bay, in the Atlantic Ocean just east of the bordering islands. There you will find patch reefs that are small and circular but have a high density of corals, and bank reefs that are elongated and run parallel to the nearby islands (which were once coral reefs themselves!!).

On these reefs you can find many types of soft corals such as sea whips and sea fans that resemble colorful plants waving in the ocean currents. You will also find many hard corals, such as boulder coral, star coral, lettuce coral, club finger coral, mustard hill coral, brain coral, elkhorn coral, and staghorn coral. These are living organisms that actually build the large limestone reefs.

Many of the fish that live on these reefs grew up in the seagrasses and mangroves of Biscayne Bay. These juvenile fish eventually leave the bay and move out to the reefs where they have protection from predators and an ideal spawning ground. Without the mangroves, seagrass beds or reefs, these beautiful fish would have no place to live.

