

## Marine Invertebrates – Selected Corals and Sponges

### description

Foundation species can either form or alter structural habitat, which can be used by other marine species, or form distinct marine communities that would not be present otherwise. Corals and sponges are sessile (immobile) animals found in a range of depths in the Canadian Pacific.

Corals are composed of tiny polyps joined into colonies and select cold-water coral species can form large, tree-like structures. Sponges are simple, filter-feeding organisms, some of which contain spicules that can serve as a skeleton. There are more than 80 species of corals and 250 species of sponges in Canada's Pacific waters (Gardner, 2009).

Corals and sponges often provide habitat for a wide range of other organisms, and are referred to as foundation species for this reason. Their role as rich and protective habitats makes them hotspots of biodiversity and, therefore, ecologically important.

This atlas page displays the locations of specimens that have been collected or compiled by the Royal British Columbia Museum. The points displayed are those for the coral and sponge species that were recommended at the BC Marine Conservation Analysis (BCMCA) Marine Invertebrate Experts Workshop in October 2007 and include:

- Corals: *Lophelia pertusa*, *Primnoa willeyi*, *Stylaster campylecus*
- Sponges: *Aphrocallistes vastus*, *Heterochone calyx*



PHOTO: DALESANDERS



PHOTO: LIVING OCEANS SOCIETY

### data sources

- Royal British Columbia Museum – Coral specimen records and Sponge specimen records

### data resolution

- More recent data were collected using GPS. Older data coordinates were estimated.

### date collected

- Corals: 1907-1990
- Sponges: 1914-2005

### date compiled

- 2012

### reviewers

- Not reviewed.

### reviewer comments

- None provided.

### caveats of use

- Few data are available to map the full extent of the habitat of these species of corals and sponges.
- Survey effort is not consistent across all planning units or across all areas of the coast. Areas with no data may not have been surveyed and these data gaps are not necessarily indicative of an absence of these species of coral and sponges. Some locations may still be important to these species but currently lack associated data to confirm their value.
- Recommended date of expiry for use of these data in a marine planning context: None provided.

### map, feature data and metadata access

- Visit [www.bcmca.ca/data](http://www.bcmca.ca/data) for more information.

### references

- Gardner, J. *Coldwater corals and sponge conservation on Canada's Pacific coast: Perspectives on issues and options*. Background paper to support discussions toward a conservation strategy. Submitted to the Organizing Committee for the Workshop, Developing a Conservation Strategy for Coldwater Corals and Sponges on the Pacific Coast. DFO, Vancouver, BC. 2009. 49pp.



**BCMCA Atlas**  
**Marine Invertebrates**  
**Selected Corals**  
**and Sponges**

**Legend**

- Corals
- Sponges

**Data Sources:**

Royal British Columbia Museum

**Base Data:**

ESRI Base Data, GeoBase, GeoBC, NOAA, Natural Resources Canada, USGS, Washington State Government

**Thematic Data:**

For more information on data sources and methods please refer to the facing page to this map

**Projection:** BC Albers NAD83

0 25 50 75 100 125 150

Kilometres

0 25 50 75

Nautical Miles

1:4,250,000 \*

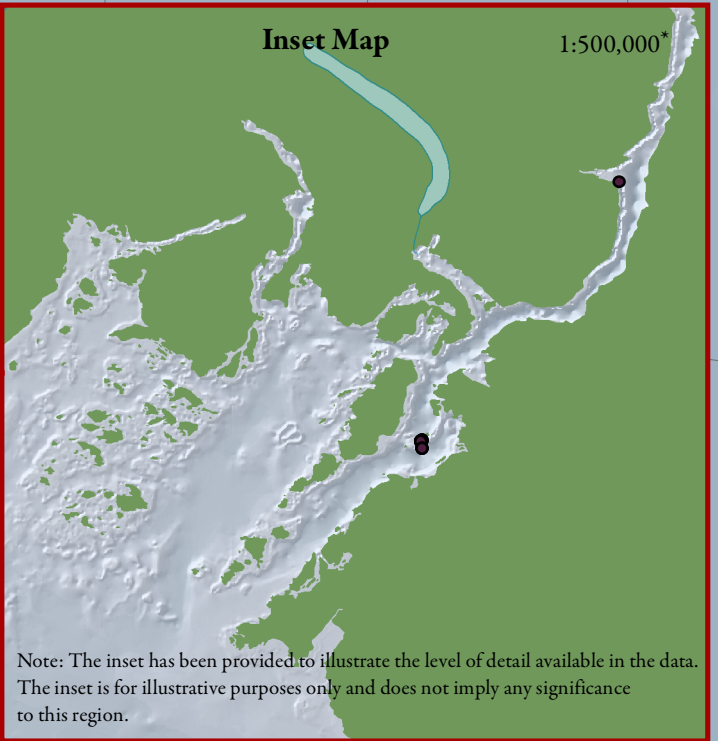
\* Written scales are approximate and are based on a 11 x 17 inch paper size.

Prepared for:



Map template by Caslys Consulting Ltd.

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Note: The inset has been provided to illustrate the level of detail available in the data. The inset is for illustrative purposes only and does not imply any significance to this region.