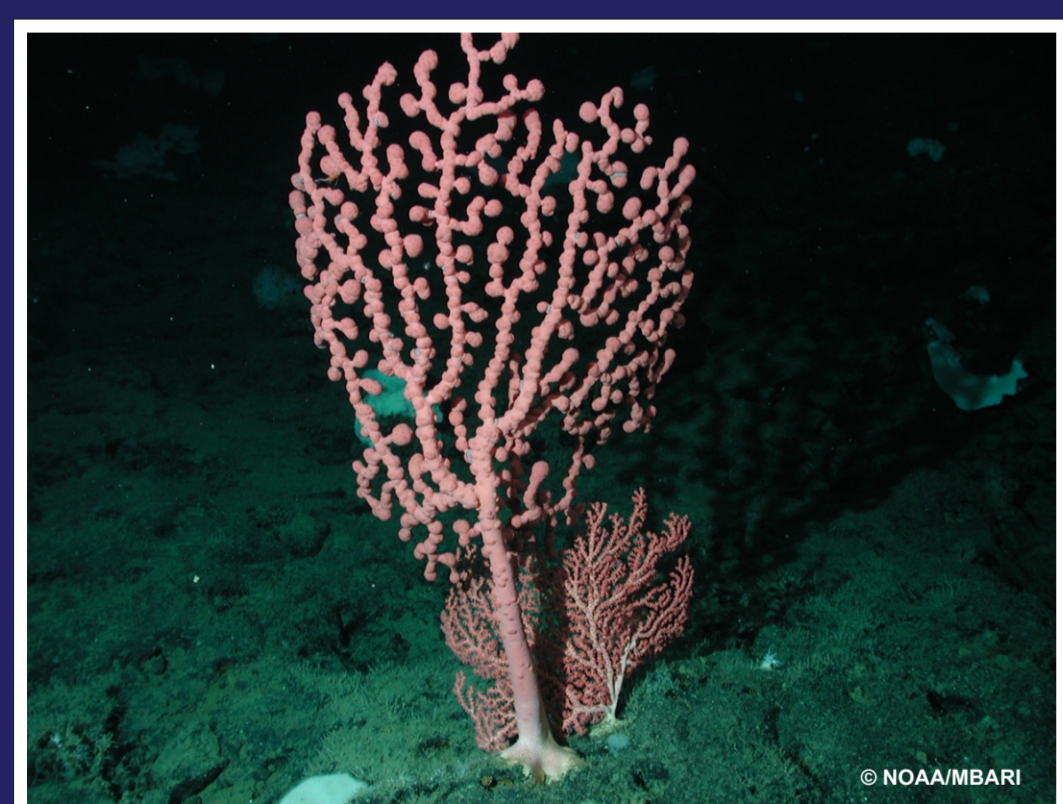


Global Cold-water Coral GIS



Cold-water corals, such as this bubblegum coral (*Paragorgia arborea*), can grow up to several metres high and can be hundreds of years old.



Cold-water coral reefs and 'gardens' act as islands and oases in the deep sea.

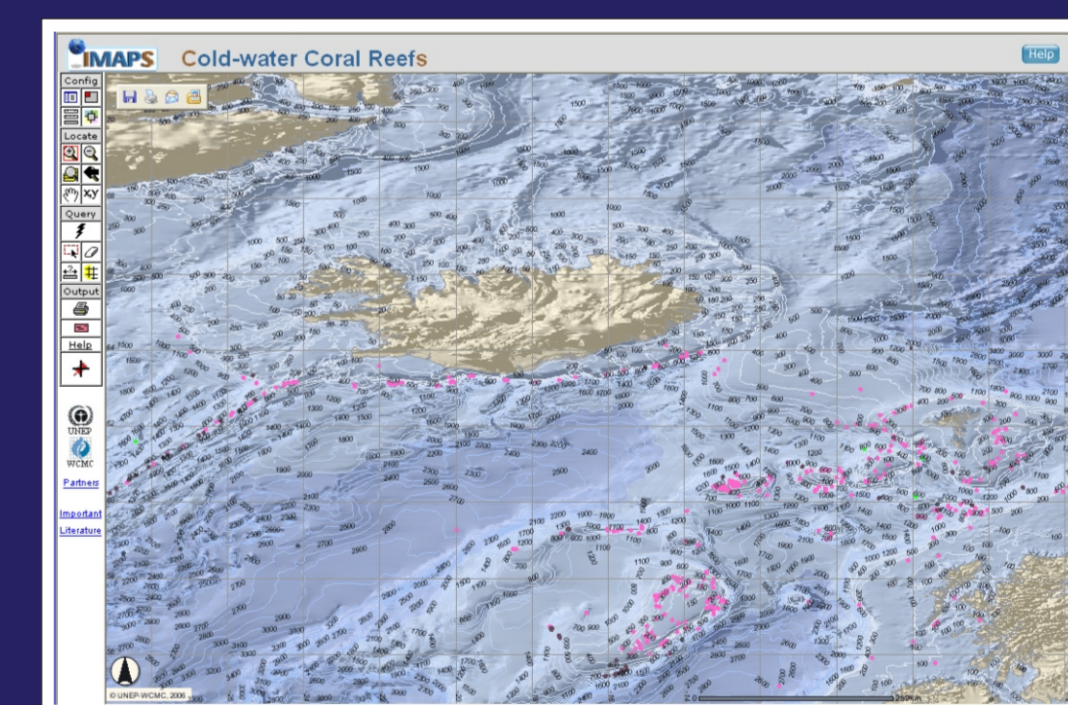
Cold-water corals are common throughout the deeper waters of all oceans. Like their shallow-water relatives, they can form complex, 3-dimensional sea floor habitats. These deep-water coral reefs and 'gardens' are hotspots of marine biodiversity. They are used by hundreds of other species for shelter, spawning and nursery grounds.

However, just as scientists are discovering the importance of these reefs, they are also charting their destruction. Cold-water coral ecosystems are vulnerable to the impact of increasing human activities in deeper waters, especially from fishing and bottom trawling, and threatened by the predicted effects of climate change-induced ocean acidification.

Countries and international organisations, including the United Nations, have called for urgent action to address destructive practices that have adverse impacts on cold-water corals. However, fragmented and dispersed information and knowledge have been major obstacles to effective action to conserve, protect and manage the risks to cold-water corals.

The global cold-water coral data base and GIS / IMapS was created to overcome this situation. It provides easy access to a wealth of information on these deep-water ecosystems, drawing on the data and collective expertise of scientists, national agencies and regional organisations from around the world.

The cold-water coral data base and GIS/IMapS will be available at <http://bure.unep-wcmc.org/marine/coldcoral> from 16 October 2006.



Using UNEP-WCMC's sophisticated Interactive Mapping System (IMapS) users can:

- Display the global distribution of cold-water coral groups and species;
- Retrieve for each record the species name, location (lat/long), depth, source, originator / contact;
- Distinguish between records in national and international waters;
- Find additional information, including photos and literature, via links.

Future features will include, *inter alia*:

- Remote record/data entry;
- Inclusion of uv-photos and video for certain locations;
- Mapping of human activities (e.g. bottom trawling) which impact on, or threaten, cold-water corals;
- Visualisation of the predicted effects of ocean acidification on cold-water corals.