GLASS SPONGE REEFS

WARNING

THE ANTHROPOMORPHIZED DEPICTIONS OF GLASS SPONGES IN THIS BOOKLET MAY BE UPSETTING TO SOME READERS

More info inside

How to refold this booklet

FRAGILE

NOT MANY PREDATORS LIKE TO EAT GLASS, SO THE MAIN THREAT TO GLASS SPONGE REEFS IS HUMANS, MOSTLY THROUGH BOTTOM CONTACT FISHING PRACTICES.

CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS ALL LIVING THINGS!

GLASS SPONGES REQUIRE A STABLE TEMPERATURE OF 9-10°C AND ARE HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO OCEAN WARMING

SEDIMENT FROM TRAWLING, BOAT TRAFFIC, FISH FARMS, AND OTHER INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES CAN SUFFOCATE GLASS SPONGES. BC'S MARINE PROTECTION AREAS PROVIDE A BUFFER OF 1KM, BUT SEDIMENT FROM 6KM AWAY CAN DAMAGE GLASS SPONGES.

GLASS SPONGES ARE INCREDIBLY SLOW GROWING, ESTIMATED AT 1-9CM PER YEAR, MAKING RECOVERY EXTREMELY LIMITED.

A HEALTHY BC FISHERY DEPENDS ON HEALTHY GLASS SPONGE REEFS

GLASS SPONGE REEFS PROVIDE HABITAT + REFUGE FOR MANY INVERTEBRATES + FISH.

THEY ARE IMPORTANT FOR WATER QUALITY BECAUSE OF THE VAST AMOUNTS OF WATER THEY FILTER: 800× THEIR BODY VOLUME EACH HOUR.

ONCE SPANNING ACROSS THE GLOBE, GLASS SPONGE REEFS WERE THOUGHT TO HAVE GONE EXTINCT 50 MILLION YEARS AGO

...UNTIL 1987, WHEN LIVING REEFS WERE DISCOVERED OFF THE COAST OF B.C.!

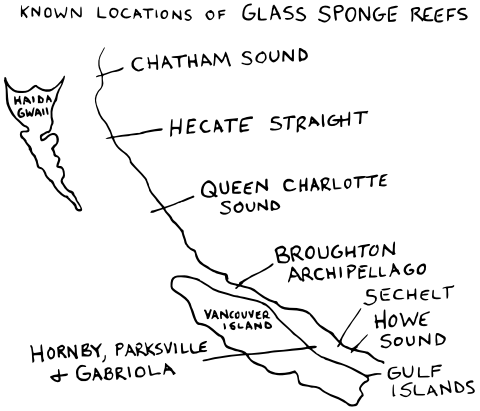
EXISTING ALMOST NOWHERE ELSE ON EARTH, THE REEFS IN HECATE STRAIT ARE AS TALL AS AN 8-STORY BUILDING AND COVER 1000 km^2, AN AREA EQUIVALENT TO VANCOUVER, RICHMOND, DELTA, BURNABY AND SURREY COMBINED.

GLASS SPONGES ARE ANIMALS!

THOUGH THEY ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM US:

What Are Glass Sponge Reefs Again?

Glass sponge reefs have inhabited this earth since long before dinosaurs. Over 40 million years ago, giant reefs stretched from Portugal to Romania, leaving fossil cliffs that can still be seen today. One of the oldest animals on earth, they were thought to have been extinct until 1987, when 9,000 year-old reefs were discovered on the North Coast of BC in the Hecate Straight.



Living 140-240m below the surface, these reefs cover hundreds of square kilometers and can grow up to 25m tall. Individuals grow on top of their ancestors and can live up to 200 years before they pass away providing a foundation for the next generation of growth.

Over the last 30 years many small reefs have been mapped along the BC coast. However, more research is needed to map their extent, and ensure proper protection.

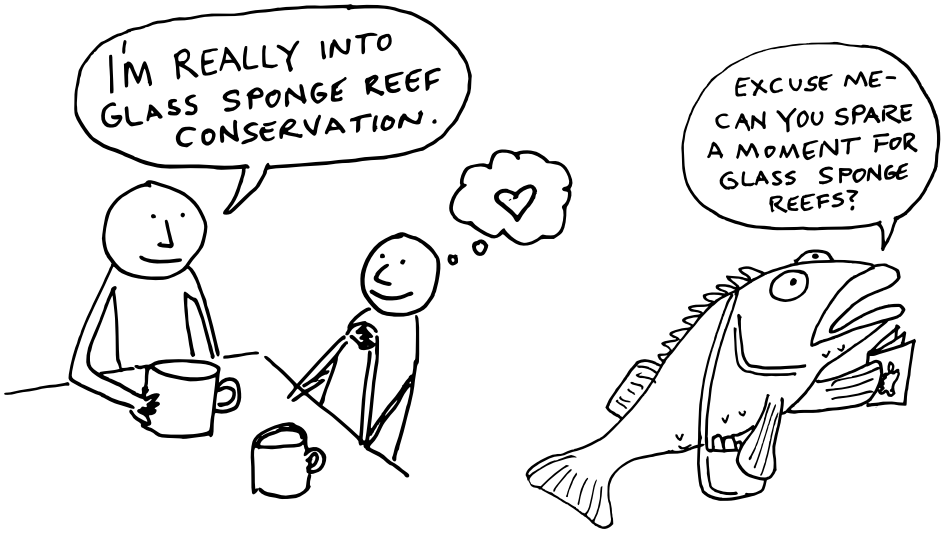
Why Protect Glass Sponge Reefs?

Glass sponge reefs create little oases on the ocean floor. Their intricate structures act as a nursery for fish and host invertebrates like prawns, sea stars, and over 100 other species. By acting as a nursery, these reefs support our fisheries, ensuring a higher abundance of wild prawns and fish for humans and other wildlife. Along with providing habitat, these reefs sequester the same amount of carbon per square meter as old-growth forests!

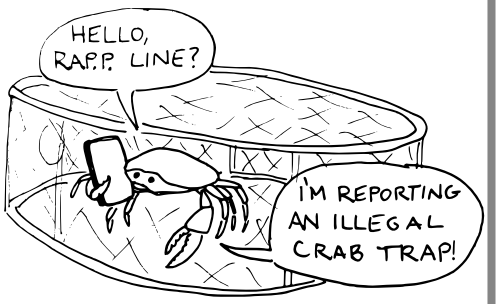


How You Can Help

Spread the word!
A perfect topic to bring up over coffee or down at the docks, these fantastic animals lack the press they deserve.



Know where glass sponge reefs are and abide by fisheries regulation and marine protected areas when boating or fishing near glass sponge reefs.
Report illegal fishing activities.



Sign the petition!
Advocate for futher marine protected areas to ensure glass sponge reefs have a safe and healthy future.

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