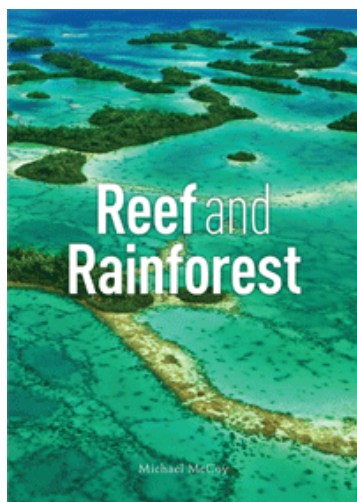


Beauty and ingenuity in the tropics

The beautiful photographs of intrepid photojournalist Michael McCoy are the core of the visually stunning *Reef and Rainforest*. McCoy's photos show marine and terrestrial life in the tropics of north-eastern Australia and the South Pacific nations of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.



Reef and Rainforest
Michael McCoy
CSIRO Publishing
2010, Paperback – AU \$59.95
ISBN: 9780643096950
Available from
www.publish.csiro.au

McCoy is not only a skilled photographer, but also a talented communicator. His lucid and accessible writing conveys a good deal of science, and brings his images to life with stories of the circumstances of their capture.

In the reef section, we learn that land rights are a serious issue for coral reef organisms, which compete intensely for space, nutrients, light and oxygen. Reef-dwellers deploy a dazzling array of tactics in the struggle for survival. Renovating squatters include the gall crab *Hapalocarcinus marsupialis*, which manipulates water flow through needle coral to form a cage-like structure. The crab spends its entire life in the cage, feeding on organic matter swept in by the currents. Some organisms treat the coral as a hotel strip, such as the white-bellied damselfish (*Amblyglyphidodon leucogaster*), which McCoy captures sleeping in the branches of a sea fan coral.

Designers, painters, sculptors and performance artists also live on the reef. The nudibranch group of molluscs achieve their brilliantly coloured surfaces from the pigments they ingest with their food. The decorator crab (*Camposcia sp.*) adorns its body with reef detritus, carefully trying on decorative pieces for size and effect and attaching them to its body with tiny hooks.

In the rainforest section, McCoy's images again encourage us to marvel at the diversity and ingenuity of adaptations for survival. Colour-changing spiders mimic the flowers on which they catch their prey, and the large eyes of lacelid

frogs are disguised from predators by elaborately veined lid markings.

From time to time, while we take in the breathtaking beauty of these environments, Michael McCoy also gently urges us to remember that climate change and poorly controlled development threaten the biodiversity of these regions.

From **ECOS** online <http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?paper=EC10026>