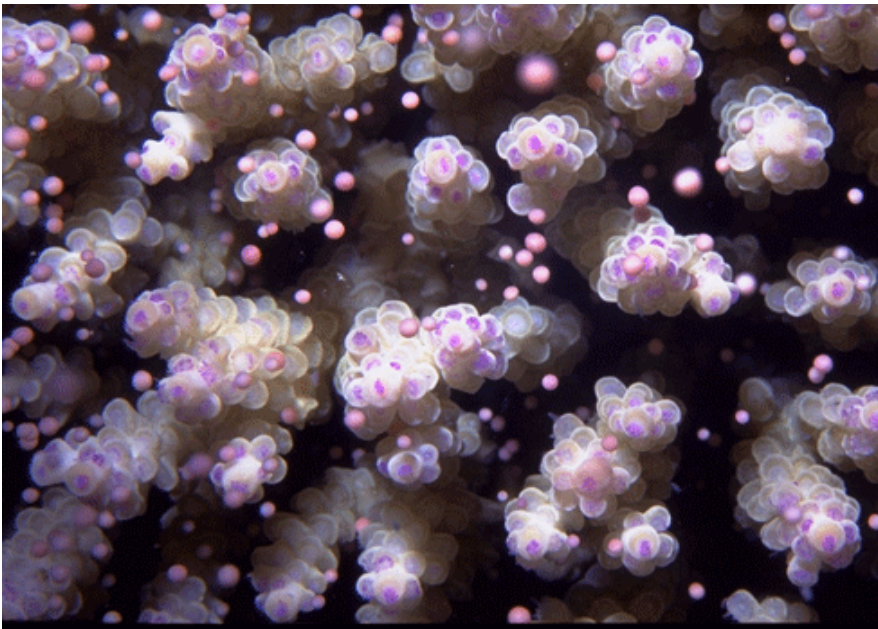


Published: 4 May 2011

Larval dispersal key to world's richest reef 'gardens'

Strong links between the coral reefs of the South China Sea, West Pacific and Coral Triangle are the key to preserving fish and marine resources that provide food and income for more than 100 million people in the Asia-Pacific region.



Credit: Chuck Savall/Coral Reef Alliance

An Australian research team has established that the richest marine region on Earth – the Coral Triangle between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines – depends on coral and fish larvae swept in from the South China Sea and Solomon Islands for its diversity and resilience.

'Maintaining the network of links between reefs – allowing larvae to flow between them and re-stock depleted areas – is key to saving coral ecosystems threatened by human pressure and climate change,' says Dr Johnathan Kool of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies and James Cook University, who led the team.

'The Coral Triangle is home to more than one-third of all the world's coral reefs, including over 600 different species of reef-building coral and 3000 species of reef fish,' explains Dr Kool.

'The science shows the region's natural resources are closely interconnected. Nations need to cooperate to look after them – and that begins with recognising the resources are at risk and that collective action is needed to protect them.'

Since 2007, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste have been working together to strengthen coral reef governance and management under an arrangement known as the Coral Triangle Initiative.