

# Coral Colony Size and Boundaries



A colony is defined as any autonomous, free-standing coral skeleton that is still identifiable to genus level (preferably to species level) based on the presence of living tissue or identifiable corallites.

# Distinguishing colony borders is difficult if:

**parts of the colony have died or broken away; and**



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**other colonies of the same, or similar species, occur close by, or even on, parts of its skeleton.**

# Coral Colony Boundaries

Look for:

Common skeleton

Connecting living tissue

Polyp size

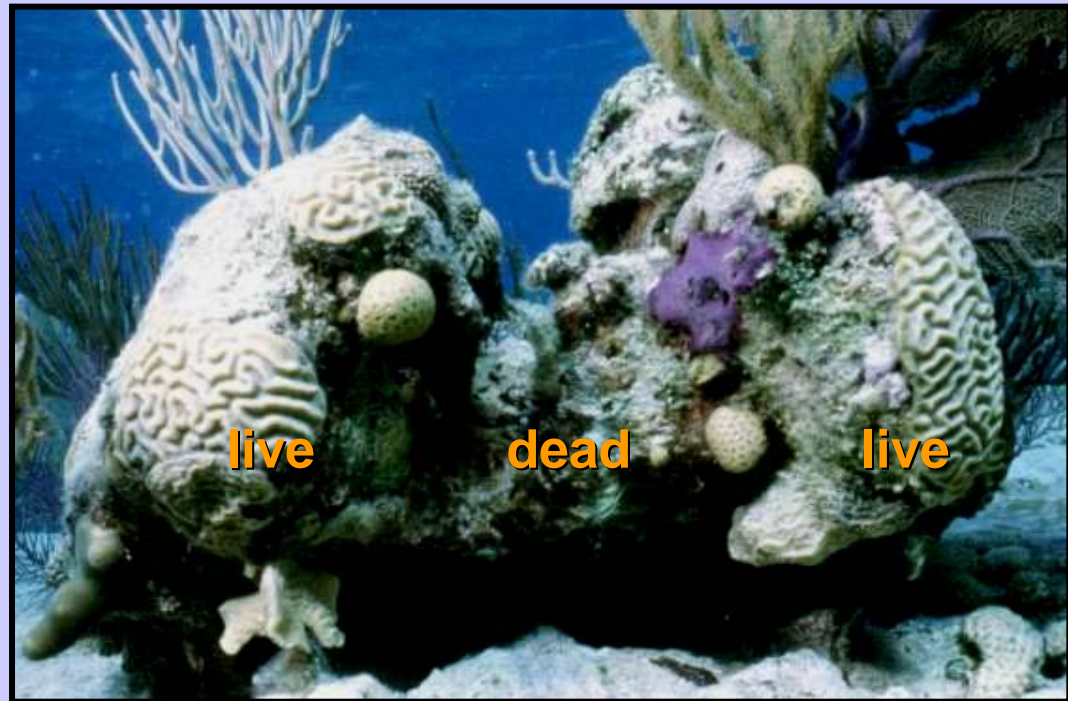
Polyp color

# Clues for distinguishing colony borders:

- **Examine the polyps in the separate areas** – *are they similar in color, shape and size?*
- **Examine the dead areas (from a side view if necessary)** – *does a common skeleton connect the polyps?*

## 1 *D strigosa* or 2

A close look reveals a single base — these are two parts of ONE coral.



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Record # of tissue isolates

# Recently Dead Colonies

Include 100% recently dead corals if you can identify to species level (based on morphology or corallites)



*M. complanata*  
100% recent dead

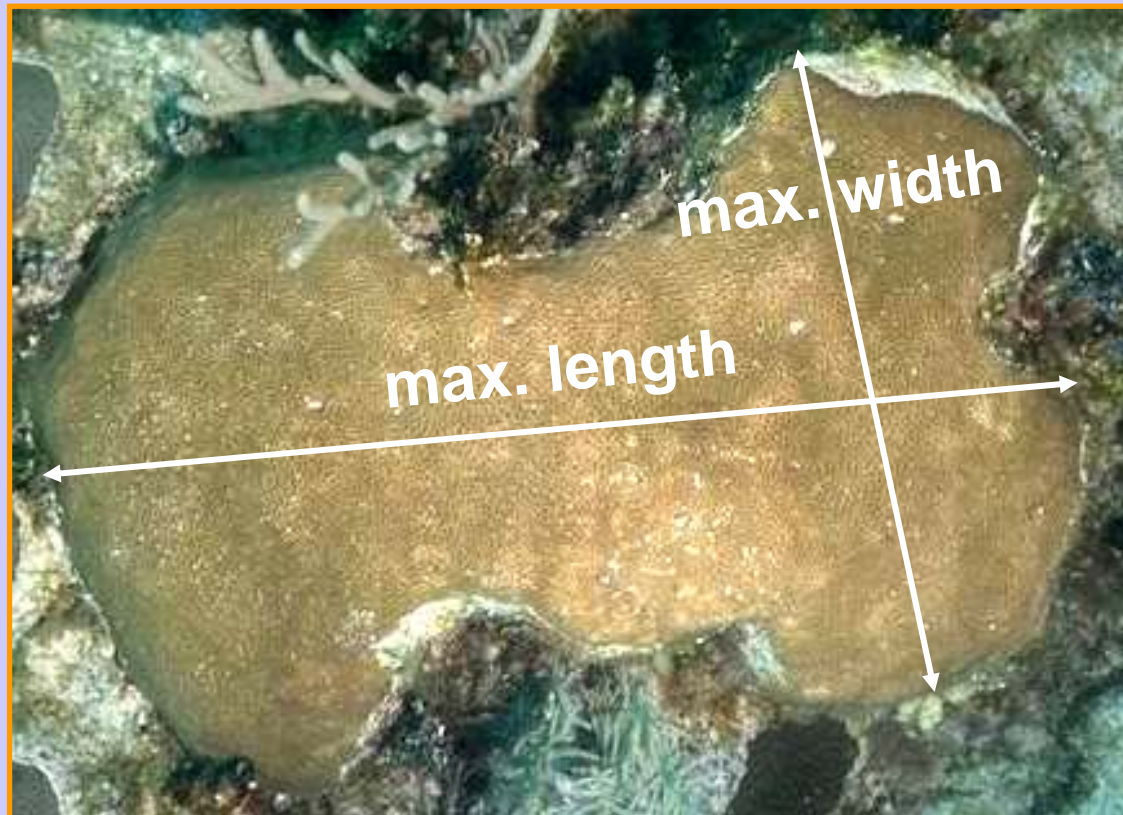


*M. annularis*  
Left (alive)  
Right (100% recent dead)

# Coral Size

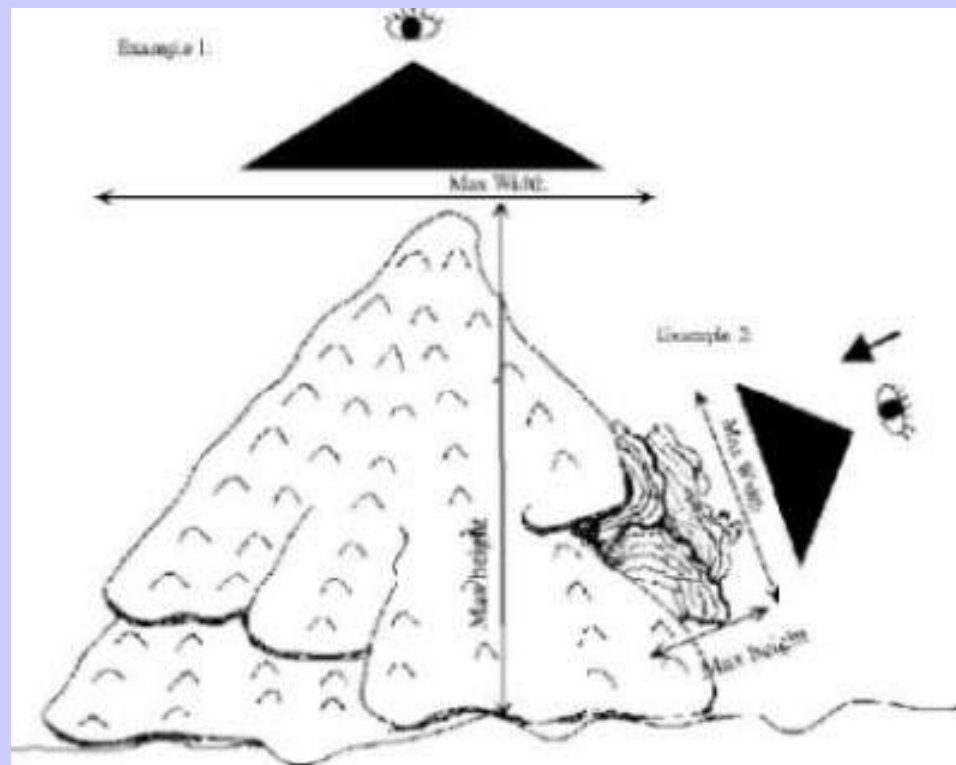
Measure x and y dimensions of the colony with the 0.5 m measuring bar

-maximum length (x) and the maximum width (y) of the outward-facing colony surface (both perpendicular to the axis of growth) as seen from above in planar view



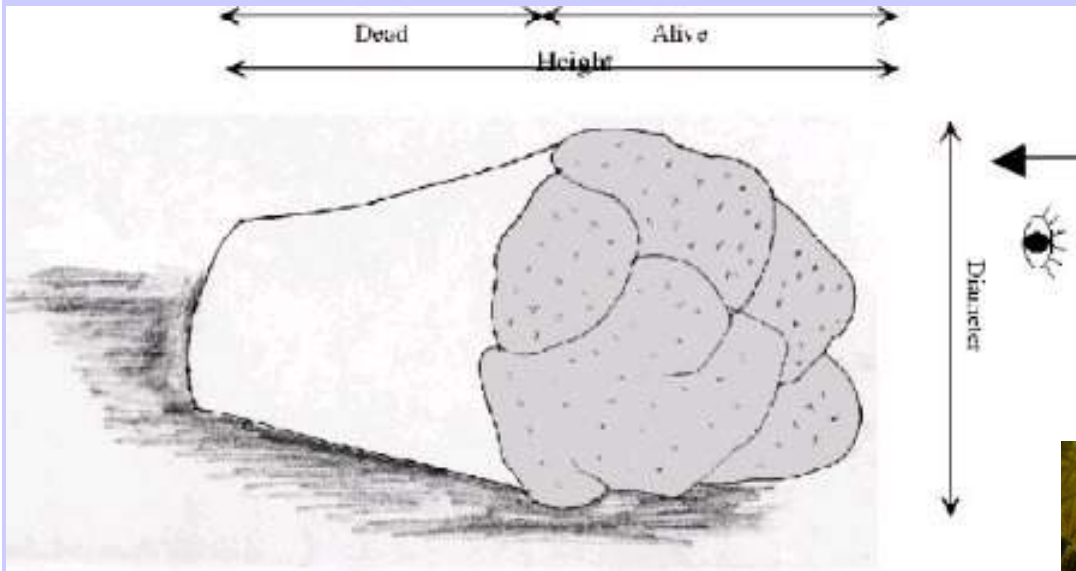
# Coral Size

Example of size measurements for large coral (left) and small coral (right).



Note: plan view is tilted for small coral because it's substrate is at an incline (eye and arrow).

# Knocked Over Corals



Note dead area and live area.



# Tissue Isolates



Record the number of tissue isolates for each individual colony on the data sheet.