

*Kids & Schools Tools**Our underwater world*

There are many different **bodies of water** around us, from huge oceans and lakes to small streams and ponds. Water can be found in caves, on mountaintops, it moves with currents and tides, and it is home to a huge number of animals and plants, from microscopic plankton to great whales. Coral reefs, submarine trenches, kelp and mangrove forests, swamps and tidepools are only some of the important features we find when we start looking at our world around and under the water. You will find some of these natural treasures in several of the New7Wonders of Nature nominees. We will look at just a few of these things here, but if you choose to investigate the exciting wet side of our world further, you will find many more interesting topics!

Reefs may be the best-known and prettiest of the submarine (which means “under water”, not just the submarine that seamen ride in!) features. Reefs are some of the most diverse habitats in the whole world. They are often in tropical waters, but can also be found in colder water. Coral reefs are made by tiny animals, the coral, which build the reef as their home. They are often on top of a rocky part of the ocean floor, and grow up toward the water’s surface, where the sun’s rays give light and warmth. Many fish and plants live in or around reefs. Coral is very sensitive to pollution and other changes in the water.

Deep ocean trenches are canyons in the floor of the ocean. The deepest, Mariana Trench near the Philippines, is 10,924 meters deep. This far below the surface of the water, there is no sunlight and the water pressure is huge, but some life, such as small fish and shrimp, still manage to survive. Many animals and other life forms that live in the darkness of the deep sea are bioluminescent—they create their own light!

Intertidal zones are the areas closest to the coast, which are full of many different kinds of life. These animals and plants often share the beaches and shallower waters with people. The ocean’s tides affect this part of our world very strongly, since the water here is sometimes deep and sometimes gone or very shallow.

Glacial lakes were formed when glaciers melted many, many years ago. They are high in mountains, and are often bright blue or green. This is partially because many have a lot of minerals in the water that was left over when the glacier melted and formed them, and these minerals let many algae grow in the water. They are also very clear because there is very little or no soil in the water, since the bottom of the lake is rock.

Mangrove forests, or mangals, are coastline areas where many mangrove trees grow and offer a habitat for other plants and animals. Since these areas are swampy coasts, the water is brackish, or a mixture between salt water and fresh water. The roots of the huge, twisted mangrove trees are very important for these ecosystems. They offer homes for oysters, crabs, eels, fish and sponges, and also cause the water to flow very slowly. This prevents soil from being eroded away by the water—even protecting big areas of coast from being swept away during hurricanes and tsunamis.

Try some of the projects suggested in the New7Wonders of Nature Project Ideas (you can find these at www.new7wonders.com/kids&schools) to learn more about the underwater world.

If you want to find out more about the exciting campaign to name the New7Wonders of Nature, visit the New7Wonders website at www.new7wonders.com.

“If we want to save anything, we first need to truly appreciate it!”
www.new7wonders.com