

Video Transcript - Biocube in Moorea, French Polynesia

Liittschwager: So this is in Mo'orea, which is part of French Polynesia. Mo'orea is about 10 miles away from the island of Tahiti. And we're going to try, and find out how many, different creatures exist in the one cubic foot of a coral reef crest. [00:00:30] The reef crest is a very sort, of high energy environment. With lots of current, and lots of surf. And then we had to find the spot. So we tried many, many, different spots. And looked at lots of locations.

Liittschwager: But, in the end we settled on [00:01:00] this one. If you look closely, you can see that it's not just a perfectly pristine head of live coral. Part of the coral is dead. What's interesting is that the highest diversity of life is in the dead coral skeleton. Because, then it becomes shelter for all sorts of [00:01:30] marine invertebrates, and structure upon which marine plants can grow.

Chris Meyer: [00:02:00] So, what we've done, is we've taken a coral head off the reef, and we're taking it apart. And we're breaking it into smaller, and smaller pieces. And we're picking everything we can out of it, that we can see with our eyes. You guys, you guys can do this. So, we take it, and try not to damage what we've got, because a lot of the animals are very fragile. They have legs, or arms, or body parts that will fall off.

Chris Meyer: Three is hermits?

Speaker 4: [00:02:30] Yeah.

Chris Meyer: You have to just trace it, it's like a scavenger hunt, go for it, come on.

Speaker 3: Is this a worm?

Chris Meyer: That's a worm, that's a worm.

Chris Meyer: Pick it apart, piece by piece, until we get pieces and we've opened it up as much, and we've reduced it to a manageable size.

Speaker 3: Oh, look at this a baby. How cool is that? It looks like a Christmas cookie.

Chris Meyer: Well I think it's an asterinid starfish. Or, it could be a juvenile pin cushion star. [00:03:00] I'll have to look at it a little more closely.

Speaker 3: That's amazing.

Chris Meyer: Then we will wash that again, shake it, rinse it, again pick that fraction, and keep working down in scale. The goal is to get every moving animal off this coral head. And we will document what we get.

Chris Meyer: Beautiful, nice job.

Liittschwager: There was a huge number of things to photograph [00:03:30] all of a sudden.

(Gentle music plays while videos show some of the creatures swimming in isolated containers.)

Liittschwager: [3:47] Tropical coral reef crests are very showy things. We found a thousand creatures in the cube. [00:04:00] It's this flourishing life, constantly, on the reef crest.

(Closes with gentle music and a montage of the creatures that were found on the coral reef crest)