**What is Lophelia pertusa?**

*Lophelia pertusa* is a stony coral. It lives in colonies ranging from a few polyps, to many thousands living together on a reef.

A polyp is a single individual, and is encased within a calcareous skeleton which forms the structure we commonly find in corals. Each polyp can have up to 16 tentacles, equipped with poisonous cells to render prey immobile.

**Where can it be found?**

Most sightings come from the north-east Atlantic, but it has also been recorded in the Mediterranean Sea, along the coasts of eastern north America, Brazil, west Africa and on the mid-Atlantic Ridge.

It is usually found in deep, dark, nutrient rich waters between 100 to 400 metres, but some records are as shallow as 40 and as deep as 3,000 metres.

**How does it build reefs?**

The skeleton is key to reef development. As more polyps join the colony, the skeletons become more complex and can trap much more sand and gravel.

As the colony continues to grow, broken coral accumulates around the base of the living coral, and continues to accumulate sediment. This process can take hundreds or thousands of years, but becomes a haven for a variety of different animal life.

**What are the pictures?**

Images from top: *Lophelia* colony; mixed reef; close up of *Lophelia* polyps taken in the lab; Fish swims above an isolated *Lophelia* colony near an oil rig.

This Factsheet was downloaded from http://www.lophelia.org and produced for the Deep-sea Conservation for the United Kingdom Project.