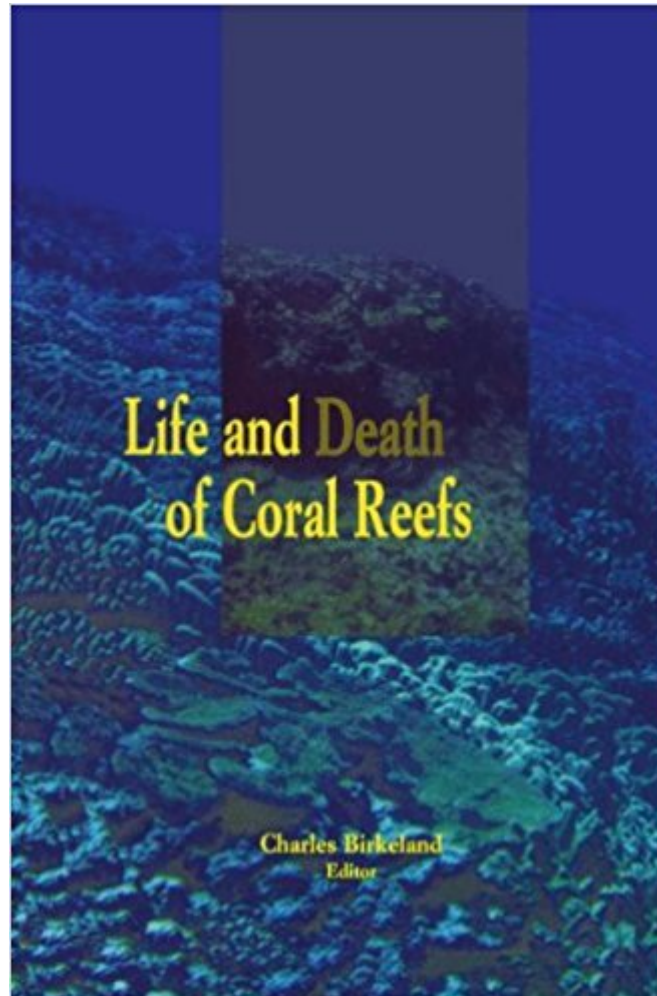




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# Life And Death Of Coral Reefs



## Synopsis

Charles Birkeland Living coral is a thin veneer, measured in millimeters. Yet this thin film of living tissue has shaped the face of the Earth by creating limestone structures sometimes over 1,300 m thick from the surface down to its base on volcanic rock (Eniwetok Atoll), or over 2,000 km long (Great Barrier Reef). About half the world's coastlines are in the tropics and about a third of the tropical coastlines are made of coral reef. Archipelagoes of hundreds of atolls such as the Marshalls, the Maldives, the Tuamotus, and most of the Carolines and Kiribati have been formed by coral. In addition to enlarging high islands (such as the entire northern end of Guam) and extending and protecting coastlines, ancient biogenic reefs have formed even larger areas on the present continents. Shallow living coral reefs are estimated to presently cover over 600,000 km (Smith, 1978). Coral reefs are dynamic systems, producing limestone at the rate of 400-2,000 tons per hectare per year (Chave et al. , 1972). The Great Barrier Reef dominates 2 230,000 km and has grown to this size in a geologically brief period of a few million years. Coral reefs influence the chemical balance of the world's oceans. Roughly half the calcium that enters the sea each year around the world, from the north to south poles, is taken up and temporarily bound into coral reefs (Smith, 1978).

## Book Information

Hardcover: 536 pages

Publisher: Springer; 1997 edition (January 31, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0412035413

ISBN-13: 978-0412035418

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.2 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,016,984 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Coral Reefs #410 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Lakes & Ponds #978 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Oceans & Seas > Oceanography

## Customer Reviews

What sets it apart is that the editor, Chuck Birkeland, has charged his distinguished group of seventeen contributors with examining the ebb and flow of life on reefs, and how this can be

affected by people. - Reef Encounter, July 1997

This is a good book, a classic for anyone studying the science of coral reefs. All reef scientists need a copy.

This is a basic and comprehensive book about the processes that affect coral reefs. Excellent edition by Birkeland, includes some of the most respectable scientists in the field. The book includes plentiful references very useful if you need to start a search in any of the topics included in the book.

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