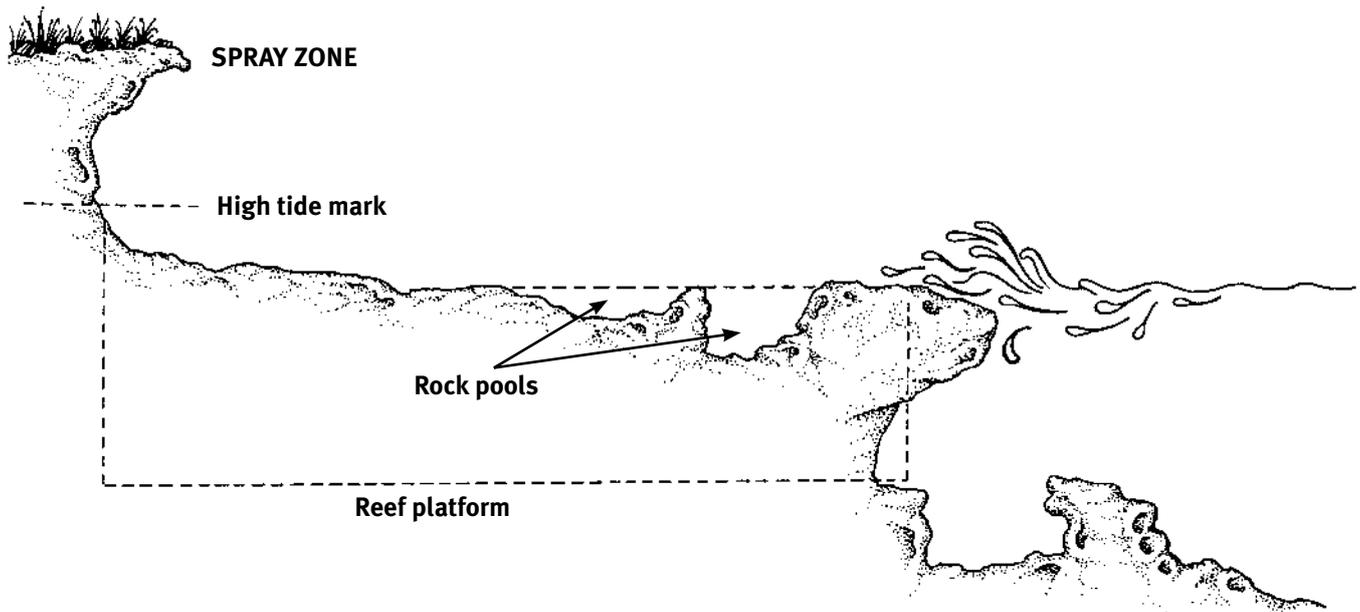


Life on a limestone reef can be very difficult. Marine life on the reef is constantly exposed to pounding waves and changing tides, strong winds and hot, drying rays of the sun. To hold tightly to the rocks, some animals such as periwinkles, limpets and abalone, have developed a strong muscular foot and many of these animals also have multi-purpose hard shells that protect them. Others have developed a hard outer body to provide the same protection as a shell.



Exploring Coastal Waters, Department of Environment and Conservation.

If you look along our rocky shores, from the highest to lowest tide levels, it is easy to see that a wide variety of marine animals live there. The high tide level is usually occupied by large numbers of small snails. These small snails are usually found in groups, around the edges of small pools, or near cracks and crevices. Larger snails are found at mid-tidal levels and on sheltered shores.

One type of snail found on the shore is the predatory whelk. These are snails that hunt down the prey they eat. Whelks, which inhabit the areas of the mid-shore, are quite small and can be found in large numbers. Larger whelks are found lower down on the shore.

Rock pools provide a continuously wet, sheltered habitat, different from the surrounding shore. Generally, there are three sorts of organisms found in the rock pools.

'Casual' inhabitants of the rock pool tend to be the same sorts of animals that are found in areas surrounding the pool. These include limpets, barnacles and bivalves that have been caught in the rock pool when the tide has ebbed.

The second sort of inhabitants use a rock pool more as a refuge. The rock pool provides a place where the inhabitants can be safe from predators that patrol the surrounding ocean. Animals that use rock pools in this way include snails and sea squirts.

The last sort of inhabitant is found in the rock pools, but may also be found hiding in damp crevices or overhangs. For example, smaller sea anemones inhabit these areas. Larger sea anemones are found only where there is permanent water.

Limestone rocky shore food web

