

Fish of the reef: lesson 3 of 3

Counting fish like MCP divers

How scientists find out which fish live on a reef



MCP divers counting fish. Photo: MCP



Counting fish underwater

MCP divers swim slowly along a tape measure and count every fish they see, sorting them into groups by type and size.

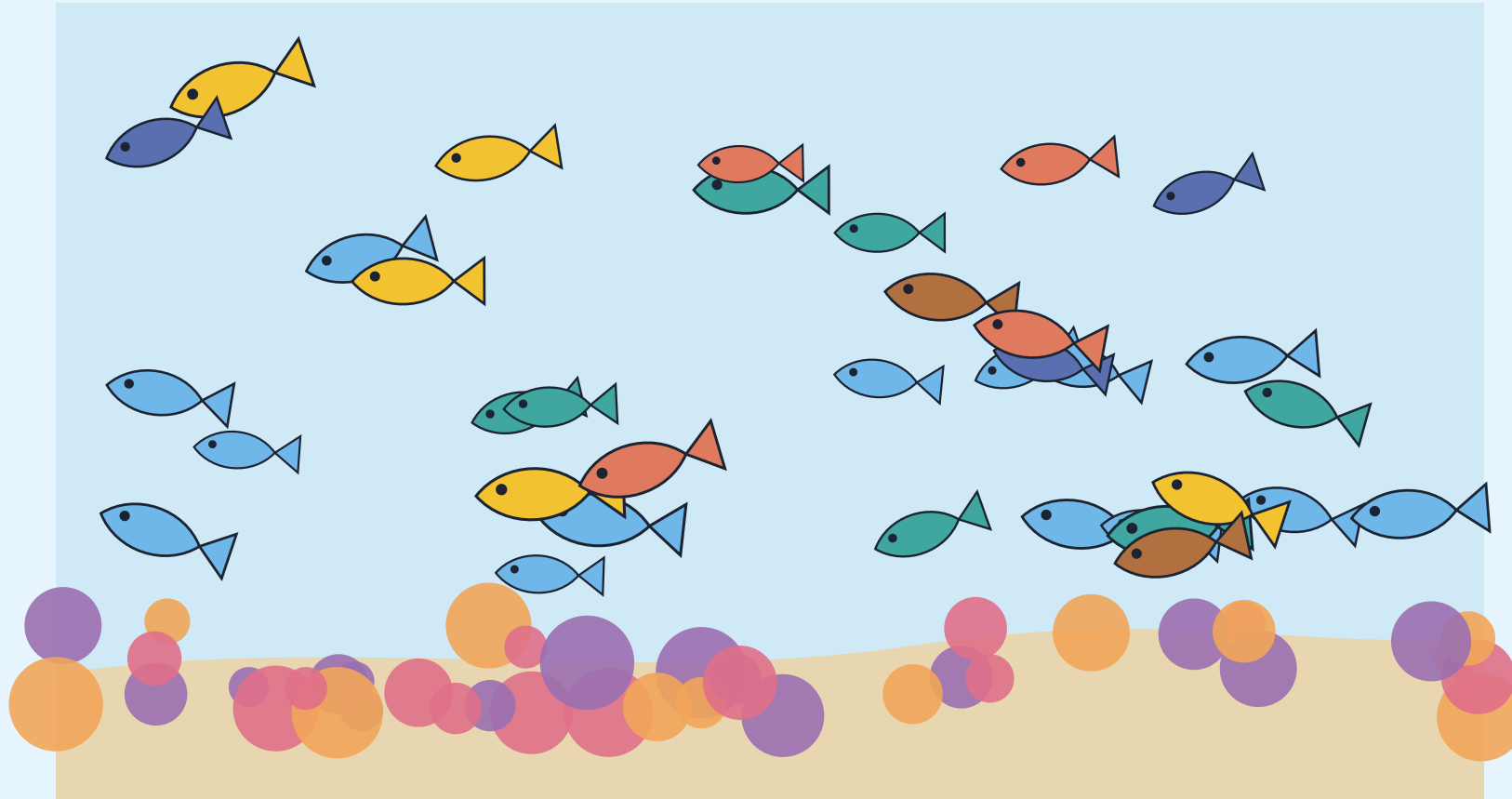
They do this again and again, at many reefs, all through the year. That way they can tell if the reef is getting healthier.



Your turn: count the reef

Count each kind of fish. Use the key. Make a tally on your sheet.

 Damsel fish  Wrasse  Butterflyfish  Parrotfish  Grouper  Angelfish



Make a bar chart

1. Add up your tally marks for each kind of fish.
2. Draw a bar for each kind on your chart.
3. Which fish was most common? Which was rarest?
4. Check your count with a partner. Did you get the same numbers?



What MCP divers really counted

2.1 million

fish counted by MCP divers from 2022 to 2026

2,923

surveys

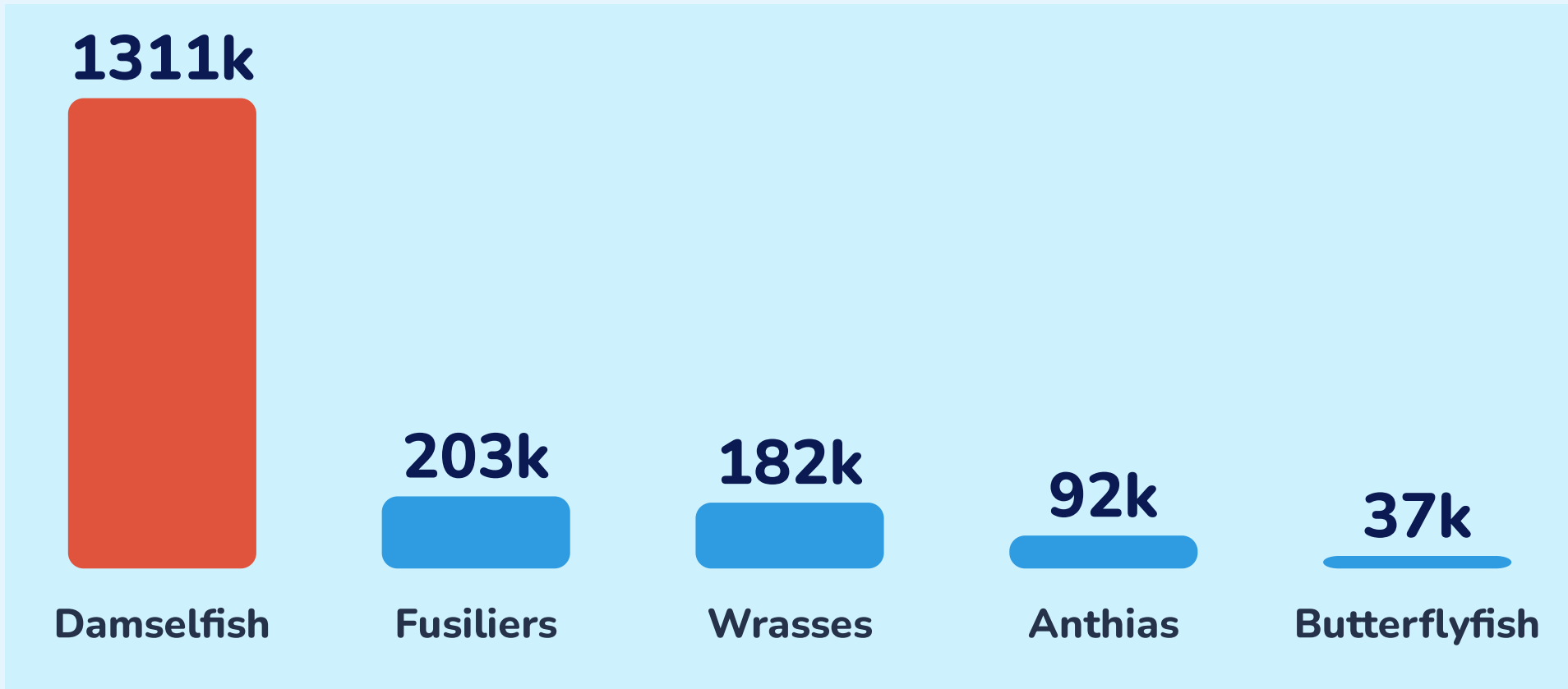
That's more than two million fish, counted one by one!

How we know: MCP fish surveys, 2022 to 2026



The most common fish on MCP's reefs

Fish counted from 2022 to 2026, in thousands.



How we know: MCP fish surveys, 2022 to 2026



Damselfish everywhere!

63%

of all the fish MCP divers counted were damselfish

Nearly two out of every three fish. Damselfish are small, live in huge numbers and stay close to the coral, so divers see a lot of them.

How we know: MCP fish surveys, 2022 to 2026



Talk about it

Was the most common fish on our poster the same as on MCP's real reefs?

Why is it hard to count fish that move?

Why do scientists count the same reef again and again?

Well done! You have finished the Fish of the reef lessons.



Photos and sources

Photos: survey divers by MCP. Count poster drawn for this lesson. All illustrations drawn for this lesson by Marine Conservation Philippines.

Sources:

- Marine Conservation Philippines. Fish survey records, 2022 to 2026.

Full links are in the teacher reading. Free to use and share for education. Made by Marine Conservation Philippines. More free lessons: marineconservationphilippines.org/resources/teachers-resources/

