



Shapes and mouths

Background reading for teachers

This reading gives you the background for each slide.

Shapes and mouths

Body shape reflects how a fish moves: laterally compressed, deep-bodied fish such as butterflyfish are agile among corals, elongated fish such as pipefish and trumpetfish hide and ambush, and flattened or bottom-dwelling fish such as lizardfish ambush from the seabed. Mouth shape reflects diet: parrotfish have fused, beak-like teeth for scraping algae, groupers use suction to engulf prey, and whale sharks and manta rays filter plankton.

Parrotfish sand

Parrotfish scrape and bite dead coral to feed on algae, and grind the coral into fine sediment that they excrete. This is a real source of sand on many coral reefs and nearby beaches. The amount varies with species and size.

The photos

All the fish photos were taken by MCP in the waters of Negros Oriental.

Sources

1. Marine Conservation Philippines. Photos and survey records.

Free to use and share for education. Made by Marine Conservation Philippines. More free lessons: marineconservationphilippines.org/resources/teachers-resources/ Updated September 2026.