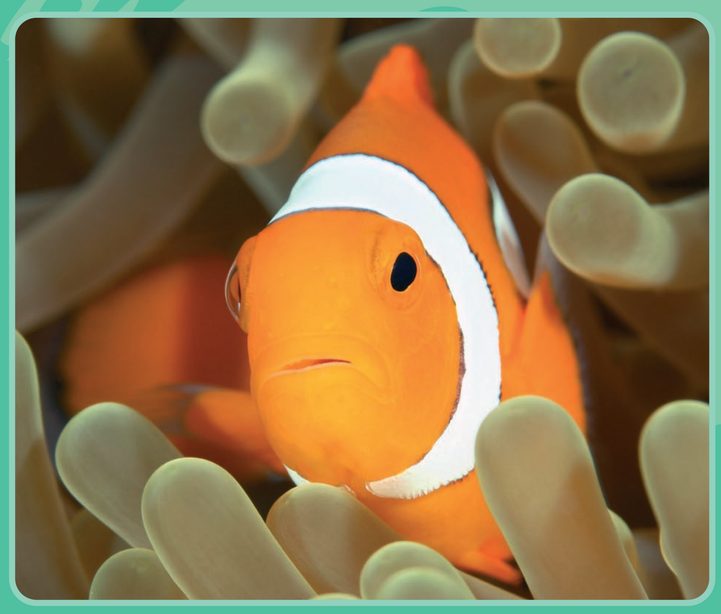
OCEANS

The oceans, covering almost 70% of the Earth's surface are central to our climate balance and at massive risk from climate change. One risk is to tropical coral reefs which house a quarter of all ocean life.

Reef systems are built up of rock-like structures made by animals called polyps, which only survive with just the right levels of sunlight, temperature, depth and acidity. Worryingly, we're heading towards deeper, warmer and more acidic oceans.



Reef inhabitants like this clown fish depend on corals for their survival, without them, they would be homeless.

EVIDENCE

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The Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean houses some of the most unspoilt reef on the planet. In 1998 massive bleaching wiped out around 90% of the reef, leaving dead coral skeletons like the one pictured. Reefs can slowly recover from these events, but if climate change continues, they might not have the chance.

If temperatures get too high, coral polyps perish, leaving ghostly white skeletons in a process called 'coral bleaching' destroying huge areas of reef in just months. This can have a lasting effect, risking everyone in the food chain, from fish and birds to whole villages and towns.

Climate change will also hit the UK's ocean wildlife hard, like the Atlantic puffin . Its food, sand eels, need cold water to survive. As the oceans warm up these fish will move or perish, threatening the puffin's existence.

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