



Education

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THE MIAMI CONNECTION

Shedd Aquarium's Research and Collection Vessel, the R/V Coral Reef II

Moored in Miami, Fla., the 80-foot **R/V Coral Reef II** is Shedd Aquarium's custom-built research and collection vessel. Piloted by a crew of full-time, licensed captains and Shedd Aquarium staff, the boat collects aquatic animals for exhibition, provides educational and research travel programs for students and offers unique natural history and dive excursions to the public. Shedd Aquarium is one of the only U.S. aquariums to own a fully equipped, state-of-the-art collection vessel. Other aquariums, scientific agencies and educational institutions also charter the **R/V Coral Reef II** to conduct collection and research projects at sea.

Launched in 1984, the **R/V Coral Reef II** carefully was designed and crafted over a two-year period to facilitate the collection and safe transport of a variety of aquatic animals. The boat features a 1,800-gallon tank and five 100-gallon holding tanks. In addition to the crew's quarters, the boat contains six double-occupancy cabins. A spacious lounge area converts into a classroom, laboratory and even a darkroom facility for underwater photography programs.

Collection trips

A team of expert Shedd Aquarium aquarists periodically boards the **R/V Coral Reef II** to collect saltwater animals for transport to Chicago where millions of inland Aquarium guests can see them. The aquarists are extremely sensitive to the fragile environments in which they collect and take great care not to harm habitats or wildlife. Fish and other animals are placed in holding tanks aboard the boat, then flown to Chicago in transport containers.

Education trips

Each summer, Chicagoland high school students are selected to participate in Shedd Aquarium's High School Marine Biology Program. This three-week course includes two weeks of intense classroom study and one week on board the **R/V Coral Reef II**. Using the vessel as a floating laboratory, students study fishes and invertebrates that live among the coral reefs and conduct field studies while snorkeling in the Atlantic Ocean.

Shedd Aquarium offers a number of boat excursions for Aquarium members and the public. These trips venture to exotic ocean locales in the Bahamas and off the coast of Florida. Some trips are specialized for certified divers and underwater photographers. Others are nature excursions that involve island exploration and snorkeling. All trips are led by Shedd Aquarium experts.

Science charters

When the boat is not being used by Shedd Aquarium, it is available for charter by other scientific and educational institutions. Several institutions, including the University of Miami, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Institute of Nautical Archeology at Texas A&M University use the boat for undergraduate and graduate classes, data collecting projects and exploration of shipwrecks.