OCEAN OBSERVATORY SCOTLAND

# SERPULID AGGREGATIONS - ANSWERS

1. What is the scientific name of the serpulid worm that forms reefs?
   - ***The scientific name of the serpulid worm is Serpula vermicularis.***
2. What are serpulid reefs made of, and what shape do they form on the seabed?
   - ***Serpulid reefs are made up of hundreds of individual worm tubes joined together. These tubes form bush-like structures on the seabed that create reef-like habitats.***
3. Describe what the serpulid worm looks like when it is not disturbed.
   - ***It has a hard white tube and a bright crown of feathery tentacles that are red, pink, or orange.***
4. Why are serpulid reefs rare, even though individual serpulid worms are found worldwide?
   - **Because serpulid worms usually live alone and only rarely grow together to form reefs.**
5. Name two types of marine life that use serpulid reefs as habitat or shelter.
   - **Serpulid reefs provide shelter and habitat for many animals. Examples include crabs, shrimps, fish, starfish, brittle-stars, sponges, and sea squirts.**
6. How do serpulid reefs help with climate regulation?
   - ***Serpulid reefs store carbon, which helps capture and lock away carbon dioxide from the water. This contributes to climate regulation and is an example of a "blue carbon" habitat.***
7. What visual change happens to a serpulid reef when it is disturbed?
   - ***When a reef is disturbed, the colourful tentacles of the worms are pulled back into their tubes, so the reef looks plain white instead of its usual bright red and orange colours.***
8. Where is the largest known serpulid reef in the world, and how tall can it grow?
   - ***The largest known serpulid reef is in Loch Creran, Scotland. These reefs can reach heights of up to 75 centimetres.***
9. Give two human activities that can damage serpulid aggregations.
   - **Serpulid reefs can be damaged by human activities such as fishing gear, anchors, mooring chains, divers' fins and changes in water flow or salinity.**
10. Why is damage to serpulid reefs especially serious and long-lasting?
    - ***Because serpulid reefs are extremely rare, some are already extinct, and they grow very slowly (about 3 cm per year), making recovery difficult.***