

FISH SPAWNING AGGREGATIONS

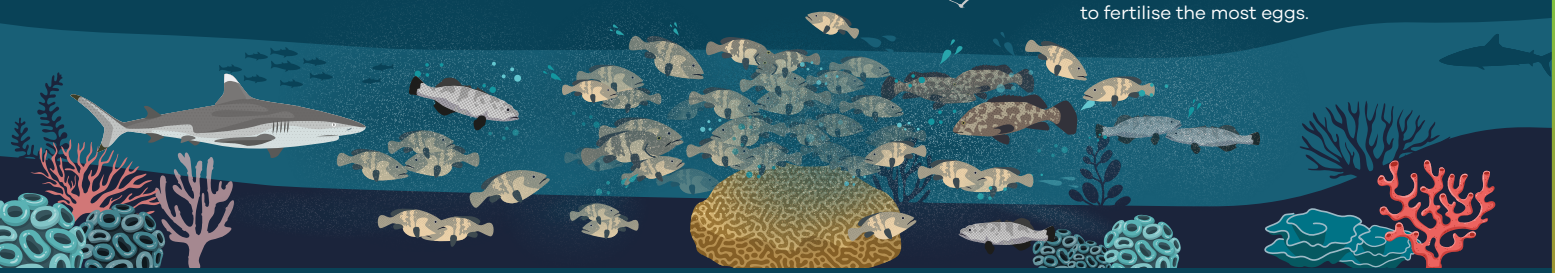
Spawning aggregations are where large numbers of fish gather together to release eggs and sperm to create the next generation. Groupers, green jobfish, longnose emperors, redaxil emperors, smalltooth emperors and two-spot red snappers are just a few species that spawn in this way.

Unfished Aggregation

1 The brown marbled grouper spawns at the new moon on Laamu Atoll. They begin their spawning dance, changing their colours, chasing each other and rubbing their cheeks together.

2 The eggs of the female groupers ripen, and their bellies swell up. The larger the fish, the more eggs she can produce.

3 When the timing is just right, females swim up into the water column releasing their eggs, followed by males releasing their sperm. Male groupers fight and jostle for the best position to fertilise the most eggs.



Fished Aggregation

4 Scavengers and filter feeders come along to scoop up eggs and sperm that are drifting in the water column. Predators are also attracted to the aggregation. Distracted groupers make easy prey!

5 Fishers in the Maldives have historically taken advantage of this natural wonder too.

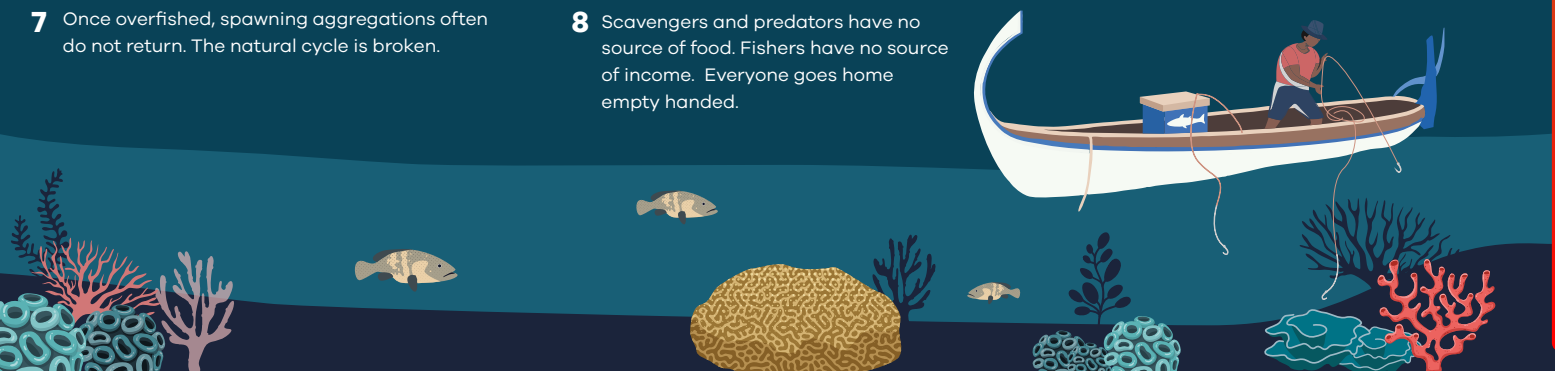
6 Hundreds of groupers can be caught easily and all in one place.



Overfished Aggregation

7 Once overfished, spawning aggregations often do not return. The natural cycle is broken.

8 Scavengers and predators have no source of food. Fishers have no source of income. Everyone goes home empty handed.



We must avoid fishing from spawning aggregations to protect fish stocks and maintain healthy natural ecosystems.