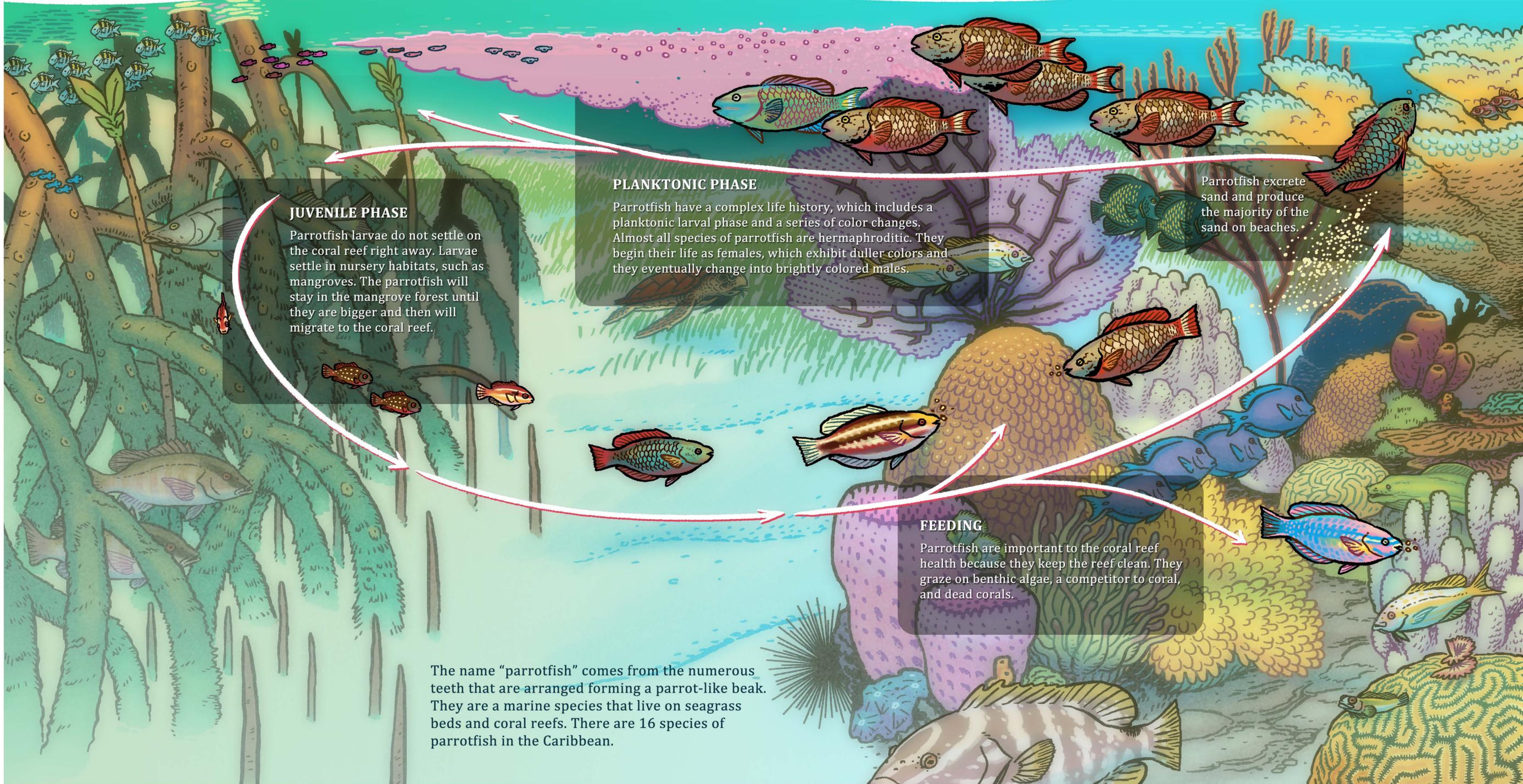


LIFE CYCLE OF THE PARROTFISH AND ITS ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE



JUVENILE PHASE

Parrotfish larvae do not settle on the coral reef right away. Larvae settle in nursery habitats, such as mangroves. The parrotfish will stay in the mangrove forest until they are bigger and then will migrate to the coral reef.

PLANKTONIC PHASE

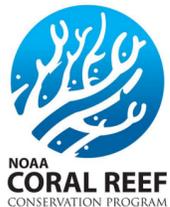
Parrotfish have a complex life history, which includes a planktonic larval phase and a series of color changes. Almost all species of parrotfish are hermaphroditic. They begin their life as females, which exhibit duller colors and they eventually change into brightly colored males.

Parrotfish excrete sand and produce the majority of the sand on beaches.

FEEDING

Parrotfish are important to the coral reef health because they keep the reef clean. They graze on benthic algae, a competitor to coral, and dead corals.

The name "parrotfish" comes from the numerous teeth that are arranged forming a parrot-like beak. They are a marine species that live on seagrass beds and coral reefs. There are 16 species of parrotfish in the Caribbean.



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