



Phylum Coelenterata or Cnidaria (Precambrian – Recent)

The phylum Cnidaria includes corals that occur as colonial corals and as solitary corals. In the colonial corals, numerous polyps (individual animals) construct and inhabit a common skeleton, whereas in the solitary corals each polyp constructs his own individual skeleton. In either case each polyp's "house" (or *corallite*) may be partitioned radially by *septa*, or transversely by *tabulae*. Corals grow attached to the sea floor, and many have been and continue to be, important reef builders. Floating members of the Coelenterata, such as jellyfish, are extremely rare in the fossil record (*Fossils of Arkansas*).

Colonial corals are present in Ordovician through Pennsylvanian formations in north Arkansas.



Rugose coral colony from the Mississippian Pitkin Limestone.



Tabulate coral colony from the Mississippian Pitkin Limestone



Michelina from the Pennsylvanian Brentwood Limestone.



Coral colony from the Mississippian Pitkin Limestone.



Tetradium coral colony from the Ordovician Plattin Limestone.

*Top drawings from *Fossils of Arkansas*, Tom Freeman.

References:

Freeman, Tom, 1965, *Fossils of Arkansas*: Arkansas Geological Commission Bulletin 22, 53 p., 12 pls., 15 figs., 1 map.