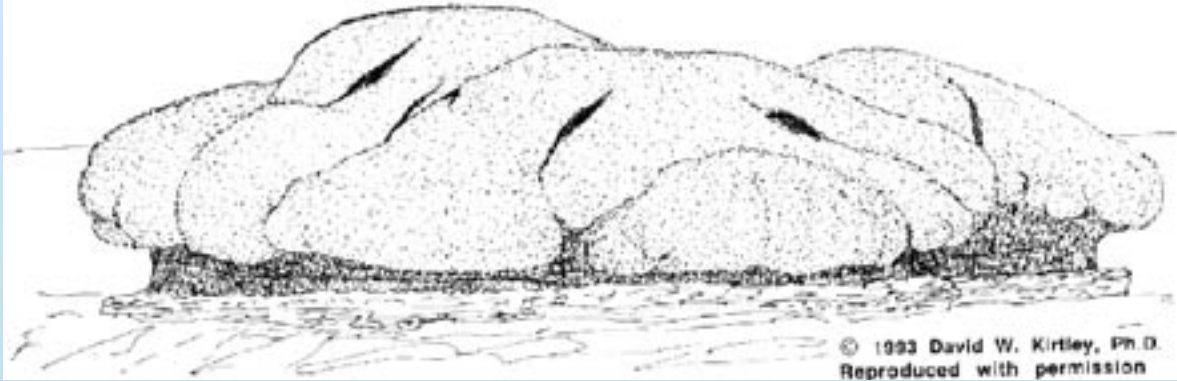
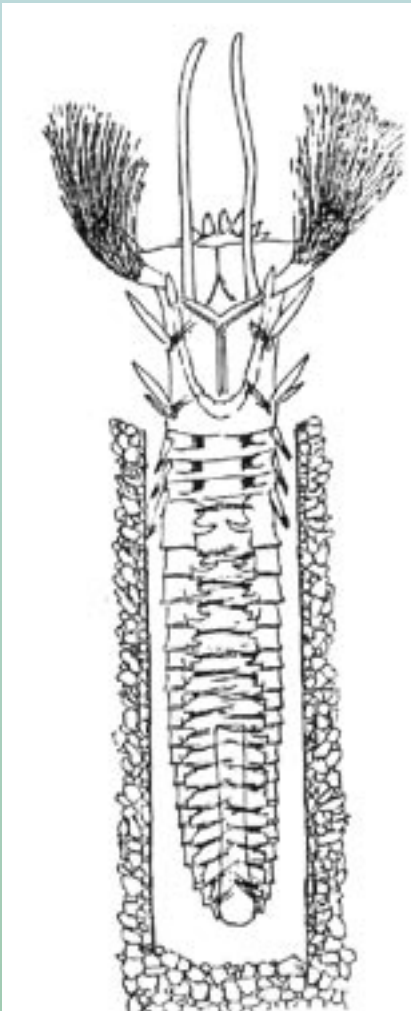




# SABELLARIID WORM REEFS



The low mounding structures that form living reefs along Florida's coast are made by numerous tiny marine bristle worms of the family Sabellariidae (sa - bell- AIR - id - ee). Each worm settles onto a hard, durable surface and begins to construct a protective tube out of the surrounding sand. The Sabellariid worms attach their tubes to their neighbors' tubes, forming large colonies which grow into massive mounding reefs. These reefs are sometimes exposed at low tide, creating tide pools and providing habitat for many marine organisms. An outstanding example of this type of reef is found at Bathtub Reef Park on Hutchinson Island, just 3 miles south of the Florida Oceanographic Society, and just north of the St. Lucie Inlet.



Single Worm in Tube

The species of Sabellariid worm found in our area is called *Phragmatopoma caudata*. The Adult worms are up to 2 inches long and 1/8 inch in diameter, although most worms are closer to 3/4 inch long. These worms can be found building their reefs on limestone and coquina formations, jetties and pilings from Cape Canaveral to the south end of Biscayne Bay.

Many different species of marine organisms live around these reefs. This makes them excellent places to go snorkeling on calm days.

These worms build sand hoods over their tubes to protect themselves from drying out in the sun at low tide. Walking on a living worm reef crushes these hoods into the tubes, sealing them, and killing the worms. People should never walk on, scrape, or break pieces off the worm reefs.