

# Rodriguez Key Field Trip

**Grade Level:** All

**Summary:** The transitional ecotone habitats within the Florida Keys often harbor diverse communities. *Neogoniolithon strictum* (“Gonio”) is a branching crustose coralline algae that creates a microhabitat for a diverse array of invertebrates. Students will snorkel the unique Gonio ecotone habitat and participate in a lab on the boat to observe the invertebrate community that lives within the Gonio.

## Program Objectives:

- Students will snorkel the unique ecotone habitat that a “Gonio” shoal creates
- Students will participate in a lab once back on the boat to observe the diverse community within the structure created by the coralline algae. The majority of the invertebrates discovered during the lab are not visible during the snorkel.
- Students will be able to identify *Neogoniolithon* algae and five species of invertebrates that live within *Neogoniolithon*

## Concepts Covered:

- The algal shoal habitat (food, shelter, substrate)
- Zonation of the various habitats within the Florida Keys waters
- Diversity in different zones and ecotones
- Importance of *Neogoniolithon* algae as a habitat

**Vocabulary:** ecotone, zonation, calcareous, coralline algae

**Procedures:** The field trip will begin at the dock with a brief discussion on ecotones, the specific shoal habitat the group will be snorkeling with an explanation of *Neogoniolithon* (“Gonio”) algae, and examples of some of the organisms they can expect to see while snorkeling. Students will board the boat and snorkel the shoal. During the snorkel, MarineLab staff will collect the coralline algae. Once on the boat, students will break apart the algae to discover an array of invertebrates. Invertebrates will be identified and discussed. Dependent on time and weather, students will be taken to a second snorkel site (North side of the island at the plane wreck or a patch reef.)

**Extensions:**

**Resources:**



© MarineLab Environmental Education  
A Marine Resources Development Foundation Program  
PO Box 787 Key Largo, FL 33037  
(800) 741-1139 Fax (305) 451-3909  
[www.marinelab.org](http://www.marinelab.org)  
Last Updated: 6/12/2016