

# GCRMN Caribbean Report – Factsheet

## What is the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network?

The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) was founded in 1995 to support the global Call to Action of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). It aimed to link existing organisations and people to strengthen monitoring efforts and to provide the data needed to inform policy makers and coral reef managers. Since its inception, the GCRMN has produced regular reports on the status and trends of coral reef ecosystems worldwide, which have highlighted the major threats to reefs. The GCRMN has worked closely with SocMon to incorporate socioeconomic data and strengthen capacity across regions to manage coral reefs more efficiently in the face of climate change. <http://gcrmn.org/>

## What is the report about?

The report is based in data from more than 35,000 ecological surveys carried out by 78 principal investigators and some 200 scientists working in 34 countries, states and territories throughout the Caribbean region, collected between 1970 and 2012. It uses this data to document the status and trends of coral reefs in the Caribbean, and detailed analyses of multiple factors responsible for the decline of reef corals in the region. The main finding of the report is that **there has been more than 50% decline in living corals throughout the Caribbean in the past half century**. This decline began long before climate change began to affect reefs – showing that was due to other factors and particularly the overfishing of grazing parrotfish. Parrotfish are being overfished despite their enormous economic and ecological value to the very survival of coral reefs and

## What are the ‘resilient reefs’ like and why?

“Resilient reefs’ have more than double or triple the average coral cover of 14% seen throughout the Caribbean. They include three notable sites: Flower Garden Banks in the USA, Bermuda and Bonaire:

Flower Garden Banks in the northern Gulf of Mexico have 55% live coral cover. Their US National Marine Sanctuary status prohibits the use of fish traps and fishing for parrotfish.

Bermuda has 35% live coral cover and a long history of banning fish traps and spearfishing.

Bonaire has 35% coral cover and has long-restricted fishing since its economy is almost entirely tourism-based. A brief breakdown of fisheries restrictions resulted in an immediate decline in the health of its reefs, which triggered a quick restitution of protections.

## How about ‘failure reefs’?

‘Failure Reefs’ are where parrotfish have been overfished, resulted in steep decline in coral cover. The worst of these

include Jamaica, the entire Florida Reef Tract from Miami to Key West, and the US Virgin Islands.

## Additional relevant quotes

**Carl Gustaf Lundin, Head Marine and Polar Programme, IUCN:** ‘All too often, our fixation on the future threats of climate change has resulted in neglecting the things we can actually fix on a local basis. We need to take a reef-by-reef, island-by-island, region-by-region approach to the local issues as we struggle to cope with the larger-scale problem of curbing the use of fossil fuels.’

**Jimmy Cliff, Jamaican reggae star:** “You can get it if you really want, but you must try, try and try. You’ll succeed at last”.

## Additional material

Executive Summary of the report Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs: 1970–2012 (in English, French and Spanish):

<http://www.icriforum.org/caribbeanreport>

The full report Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs: 1970–2012 is available (in English) at:

<http://www.icriforum.org/caribbeanreport>

8-minute Video ‘From Despair to Repair’ about implications of the report (English):

<http://vimeo.com/99653458>

Photos of Caribbean coral reefs illustrating main points of the report:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hehido9i8knqbw/AACYL1-tVsbQgoSCbkXSwj0la>

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## About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

## About ICRI

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is an informal partnership that brings together Nations and international organizations with the objective of sustainable use and conservation of coral reefs for future generations. ICRI plays an important cooperation, collaboration and advocacy role for coral reefs within the international arena; its actions have been pivotal in continuing to highlight globally the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing.

<http://www.icriforum.org/>

## About ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies undertakes world-best integrated research for sustainable use and management of coral reefs. Funded in July 2005 under the Australian Research Council Centres of Excellence program this prestigious research centre is headquartered at James Cook University, in Townsville. The Centre is a partnership of James Cook University (JCU), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), The Australian National University (ANU), the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), The University of Queensland (UQ) and the University of Western Australia (UWA).

<http://www.coralcoe.org.au/>

## About UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. To accomplish this, UNEP works with a wide range of partners, including United Nations entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society.

[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)



## About the Smithsonian Ocean Portal:

The Ocean Portal) is the virtual arm of the marine initiative of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

Led by Editor-in-Chief Nancy Knowlton, the site receives over 100,000 visits per month and hosts blogs, slide shows, overviews, and videos. All ocean topics are covered, ranging from ocean life and ecosystems to ocean inspired art, with a special focus on conservation and human connections.

<http://ocean.si.edu>

