

Coral Reefs and the impact on their ecosystem

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Beautifully colored coral reefs once teeming with life are dying. Fish once with homes have disappeared. This may seem like something from a science fiction movie, but it's happening right now. Coral is a main part of the ocean. We should do what we can to protect it. Coral reefs are disappearing and not many people pay attention to this. According to Chasing Coral, A Netflix documentary, one of the many threats that these beautiful reefs are facing, is coral bleaching. This is a huge deal and we should do something. In this paper, you will learn why the reefs are important to the ecosystem, a few of the threats to coral reefs, how coral reefs play a role in the main ecosystem, and a couple of the ways you can help.

Coral reef facts and impacts

Twenty-five percent of marine life relies on coral reefs. With no coral reefs, many species of fish would never be seen again. Without a healthy coral reef we would not have a healthy ocean without a healthy ocean we would not have a healthy Earth. This impact would be incredibly devastating to everyone.

Another reason why we should protect coral reefs is that they are directly useful to many people. These reefs provide food and income for over 500 million people! If the coral reefs die out the same 500 million people will lose their jobs *and* their homes. Furthermore, many of the new medical drugs that are coming to help humans are reliant on specific types of coral, including one that fights cancer!

In addition to these important facts, every single beach in the world is made of digested coral. The beaches are there because parrotfish eat the coral and pass it out as sand! This is important because a lot of the travel economy relies on beaches. They also dissipate waves and without that, the mainland would be eroded by waves.

A fun fact is that The Great Barrier Reef in Australia is around the entire length of the East Coast of the United States! Another fact is some types of coral can create their own chemical sunscreen, however, it still isn't enough to combat coral bleaching.



The threats to coral reefs

According to NOAA, threats to coral reefs include coral bleaching, surface runoff, and the heating up of the ocean. Coral polyps (Coral polyps create a coral structure and provide the coral with food, more info at <http://chasingcorals.com/>) are a key species. Coral bleaching happens when the water temperature increases and the Coral polyps inside of them can't do their jobs anymore so, the coral gets rid of them, however, that's almost always all of the Coral polyps so the coral starves to death. The bleaching event that is happening right now has been the longest, deadliest, and most widespread in history. As stated in the information found from the documentary Chasing Coral "In the Florida Keys around 80 to 90% of the coral is gone." In the last 30 years, we have lost more than 50% of the coral on earth! Based on current trends, within the next 30 years, coral bleaching will destroy most of the world's coral. If we don't address this huge problem we will lose the ocean ecosystem and millions of people will suffer.

Some people even try to take coral pieces home which is very harmful to the coral. There are some different types of corals that people have harmed so much they are a protected species of coral, like the Staghorn Coral.

Another of the many threats to coral reefs is overfishing. This harms the coral because fishing nets can entangle and kill coral. This also harms the coral because it kills most of the fish and without the fish, it's like a city with no people.



How you can help

There are many ways that coral can be hurt, so we should do our best to make sure that this stops happening. There are many ways that we can protect coral reefs. The best way to protect coral reefs is to not pollute. The way that we can prevent corals from getting destroyed, by treating the environment well, using fewer fossil fuels, using more renewable energy resources, and protecting the corals, you can make a difference. However there are many ways you harm even if you are not aware of it, including putting recyclables in the trash bin, lots of people accidentally put recyclables in the trash bin, and using chemicals that harm the environment. This huge part of our ecosystem is in danger. And if you want to help, visit [here](#) to learn about and help the coral.

In conclusion, you can make a difference by protecting the coral if you live near a coral reef, and you can make a change by speaking out to your friends and family. Please do your part in helping the corals and saving our oceans.

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Thanks for reading!

-Kheiron

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