



## CAN-005-Coral Dying in the Gulf-GOM

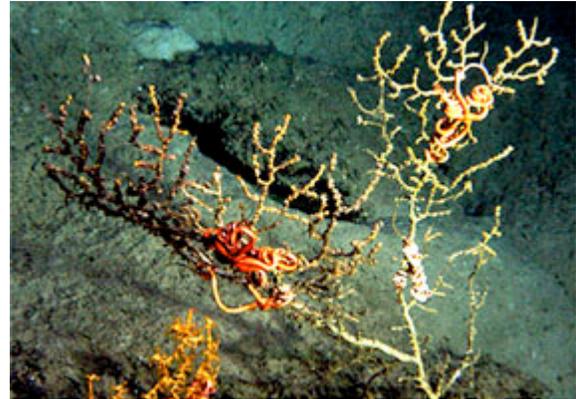
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Vic Ferguson

The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation 281.886.7428 P.O. Box 311117 Houston Texas 77231

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There was a collective sigh of relief when it seemed that the BP oil spill—the worst oil spill in the nation’s history—did not carry the long-term environmental repercussions many thought it would. **But now, dead coral discovered seven miles from the spill site is telling a different story. On November 4, it was reported that scientists returning from the Gulf of Mexico who had been there studying reefs found a “brown substance” covering large coral more than 4,500 feet below the surface, causing 90% of 40 large corals to have dead or dying parts.**



The substance will undergo testing to determine if it is oil, and, if so, whether it might be oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill. The research cruise was co-sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. The original purpose of the study—which involved scientists making multiple trips to the region where the dead coral was discovered—was to study various coral colonies and the ways that sunken ships and oil rigs might act as artificial reefs. But the spill has given new urgency to their studies.

**A single colony of coral with dying and dead sections (on left), apparently living tissue (top right) and bare skeleton with very sickly looking brittle star on the base.**

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"These observations capture our concern for impacts to marine life in places in the Gulf that are not easily seen," said NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco. "Continued, ongoing research and monitoring involving academic and government scientists are essential for comprehensive understanding of impacts to the Gulf."

SOURCE: [The Times-Picayune](#)

Vic Ferguson  
The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation  
Executive Director  
P.O. Box 311117  
Houston, Texas 77231  
vic.ferguson@wfcrc.org  
www.wfcrc.org  
281.886.7428 (office)  
281.309.1201 (cell)