



## CAN-014-Collapsing Reefs- Cayman Islands

How do we save coral reefs?

Vic Ferguson

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### Study shows Caribbean coral reefs close to collapse

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**LONDON, England, Wednesday September 12, 2012** – A new study reported in Britain’s Guardian newspaper reveals the grim fact that less than 10 percent of coral reefs in the Caribbean show living coral cover and are on the verge of utter devastation.

Carl Gustaf Lundin, a director at the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which published the research, told the British newspaper that global warming, pollution and overexploitation are the main causes for the damage to reefs.

“The major causes of coral decline are well-known and include overfishing, pollution, disease and bleaching caused by rising temperatures resulting from the burning of fossil fuels,” Lundin said.

“Looking forward, there is an urgent need to immediately and drastically reduce all human impacts if coral reefs and the vitally important fisheries that depend on them are to survive in the decades to come,” he stressed.

The study noted that in the 1970s, 50 percent of the reefs showed coral that was alive and continuing to grow. In stark contrast, the latest survey found that only eight percent is covered with living coral growth.

Scientists participating in the study also warned that there was no evidence that coral death would be slowing.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration points out that global warming is a big factor with coral reefs, as more bleaching and infections break out when temperatures rise.

Additionally, more carbon dioxide in the air alters the chemistry of the oceans, and slight changes in acidity could alter the growth rates of coral.

ScienceDaily, in reporting the work of researchers of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, nevertheless offered a more optimistic scenario in quoting Terry Hughes of James Cook University.

“The good news is that, rather than experiencing wholesale destruction, many coral reefs will survive climate change by changing the mix of coral species as the ocean warms and becomes more acidic.”



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Hughes theorizes that different living coral species may become more dominant and that the threat to coral reefs is not as severe.

He nevertheless noted that local factors like **pollution** and overfishing also need to be addressed.

The International Coral Reef Initiative indicated that damage to reefs also threatens the livelihoods of 500 million people around the world who live and work near them.

Read more:

<http://www.caribbean360.com/news/study-shows-caribbean-coral-reefs-close-to-collapse#ixzz30U17mNyT>

[http://wn.com/coral\\_reef\\_in\\_the\\_bahamas](http://wn.com/coral_reef_in_the_bahamas)

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