

# The significance of coral reefs

Business



Coral reefs can be found in tropical oceans in multiple different countries. They are rich in biodiversity and attract many species that we benefit from in both the medical field and in economic growth. Coral reefs provide many things such as food, protection to our shores and marine animals, employment, and medical help.

However, the coral reefs are under a dangerous amount of stress from pollution, warming water and poor fishing practices. This will be detrimental to humans and our economies. There is more to learn about corals reefs and there should be more research conducted to better understand coral reefs and how they are beneficial to the world. Many countries rely on coral reefs for food, entertainment, and as a source of income. Coral reefs provide a place for fish and countless other aquatic organisms to live. Many of the organisms are used for food, and therefore harvested creating a major source of income.

Fisherman's source of income comes from the fish that live amongst the coral reefs. Fishing is a large industry, and without this income economies will crash." In many places, the loss of coral reefs would amount to an economic disaster, depriving fishermen of their main source of income, forcing people to find more expensive forms of protein and undermining the tourism industry."(Levins) The economy would be greatly affected without the coral reefs. There would be nothing to fish, and therefore nothing to trade. All of the species living in the coral reefs will have perished or migrated in hopes of finding another suitable home leaving an abandoned and dying coral reef as well as no source of income for the fisherman.

Coral reefs not only provide economies with a main source of income, they also provide us with many health benefits and cures to some of our many medical ailments. Medical benefits provided by coral reefs are not limited to coral reefs themselves; a multitude of benefits can be obtained from other organisms that exist only within the coral reef ecosystems. Some of these inhabitants can have an anti-inflammatory effect on humans; such an organism include the caribbean sea whip which is found as organic chemicals that have strayed from a soft coral. Also found in coral reefs is an Anti-cancer compound, Bryostatin 1, found in Bryozoan bugula Neritina-an organism that grows in such environments (Levins). Many of the species living in coral reefs can only be found in coral reefs. Without the coral reefs these species will go extinct and prevent us from being able to use the medical resources provided.

People pose the greatest threat to coral reefs. People create a lot of pollution that ends up in our oceans. Things such as oil, gasoline, fertilizer, and other chemical substances use in our daily lives have a negative effect on coral reefs. Overfishing changes the coral reef environment for the worst. Even things people would not typically find as a threat can be life changing to these animals, such as using recyclable bags instead of plastic bags from grocery stores.

These plastic bags find their way into these waters where turtles mistake them for jellyfish (the main source of protein in their diet); these unsuspecting victims then gobble down on these bags which in turn cause them to choke on the unsuitable substance. Equally as deadly are the plastic rings around packs of sodas, these creatures tend to not see the plastic

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floating amongst the living organisms. When they try to snack on an organism, often times their heads get stuck in them, or they ingest these harmful products created by humans. As they struggle to get away from such entanglements they typically end up even more tangled than they were before, which in turn causes them to suffocate. In addition to getting caught in these products organism may ingest them causing health problems or death. The loss of organisms can have a ripple effect on coral reef ecosystems and the economies depending on them.

A more long-term toxin humans tend to leave behind are chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides that wash away from people's yards, gardens, and farms. These toxins eventually flow into the the ocean contaminating the water and harming the coral reefs and the organisms inhabiting them.

Pollution is not the only human caused destruction to coral reefs. Overfishing changes the coral reef environment for the worst. Fishing plays a major role in surrounding communities and the economies, however, overfishing can cause damage to the coral reefs and the species inhabiting them.

In addition poor fishing habits and techniques cause great harm to coral reefs. Furthermore, many countries depend on coral reefs to protect their shores from storms and surging waves. Coral reefs act as a barrier or an "undersea wall." It is Pendleton who estimated that about 62 million people live less than 33 feet above sea level and less than two miles from a coral reef. ' The waves just come into shore full force. That can cause loss of life.

It can cause loss of property.'"(Dennis). Without coral reefs to protect the shores, erosion can occur as well as severe destruction by destroying shores

and businesses that require billions to repair or rebuild. This can be very detrimental to the economy and people living near the ocean. Coral reefs are rich in biodiversity and provide unlimited amounts of entertainment. Coral reefs are major tourist attractions, especially in tropical areas.

“ According to a report by the Key West chamber of commerce, tourists visiting the Florida Keys in the US generate at least US\$3 billion dollars in annual income, while Australia’s Great Barrier Reef generates well over US\$1 billion per year”( Coral reefs: Importance). Not only do the coral reefs help by attracting tourists to pay the business running the attractions, but the coral reefs also help the surrounding smaller businesses. These smaller businesses are usually restaurants and souvenir or gift shops that make their money from the people who are on their way to the main attraction cite (the coral reefs). With all the benefits of coral reefs and their ecosystems, it is right we return the favor and use our resources and our technology to secure the future of coral reefs. From providing us with anti-inflammatory medicines to providing food for multiple countries, these ecosystems play a major role in the food web of surrounding areas. It is important to keep these areas clean and provide scientists with sustainable income for research in these areas. If we provided money into research such as this, we will be much more aware of what we have living on our planet along with knowing what possible medical advantages we could gain from these organisms.