

OCEANS

A photo essay on coral reef restoration efforts in Florida

With photos from marine photographer Brandon Cole, dive into this photo essay exploring efforts to protect at-risk coral reefs off Florida's Atlantic coast.

by MELISSA GASKILL MARCH 24, 2022

CT.org has provided the beginnings of this “good news” article with a link to the balance. Don't miss the photos, they are spectacular. **LINK:** <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/03/a-photo-essay-on-coral-reef-restoration-efforts-in-florida/>



Staghorn coral off Florida coast

Over the past 40 years, nearly 90 percent of live corals on reefs in the Florida Keys have been lost. Worldwide, tropical coral reef coverage has declined by 30% to 50% since the 1980s as climate change raises temperatures, sea levels, and ocean acidity. Authors of a recent study predict catastrophic effects on coral reefs throughout the world from an increase of 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels.

Those corals will be missed. These ecosystems cover less than 1 % of Earth's surface, but they feed and shelter more than a quarter of all marine fish species, as well as many other marine animals.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), coral reefs directly support more than 500 million people, providing food, coastal protection, and livelihoods earned from fishing and tourism. Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, Florida, reports that the reefs running some 350 miles from the Dry Tortugas to St. Lucie Inlet contribute \$8 billion to the state's economy through tourism, fisheries, and protection from severe storms. Mote scientists are joining experts around the globe to try and *restore* these ecosystems. One such project, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's "Mission: Iconic Reefs," aims to restore seven reefs, one of the largest such efforts in the world. The organizations conducting in-water restoration work for the project's first phase include Coral Restoration Foundation (CRF), Mote, and Reef Renewal.

Bleached brain coral (*Pseudodiploria strigosa*). This symmetrical coral grows in shallow parts of the Caribbean Sea and off the coasts of the Bahamas, Bermuda, Florida, and Texas. One way climate change affects coral reefs is that it causes a process called bleaching. [the article continues...]

Melissa Gaskill is an Austin-based science writer who frequently covers climate change and ocean issues. Photos: Courtesy of Brandon Cole Marine Photography.

The article, with great photos, continues at: <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/03/a-photo-essay-on-coral-reef-restoration-efforts-in-florida/>