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Coral Reefs

And how to save them



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People often stare up into the sky in amazement and wonder what might or might not be out there. But what most of us don't notice, is that there is a whole alien world right in front of us, hidden beneath the water and that as of this moment we are on course to see it destroyed without even realizing it.

Coral reefs are one of the biggest and most important eco-systems on planet Earth. Not only are they beautiful to look at, they are also the place where most of the sea food we eat begins its life, making them a source of food and income for more than 100 Million people worldwide.

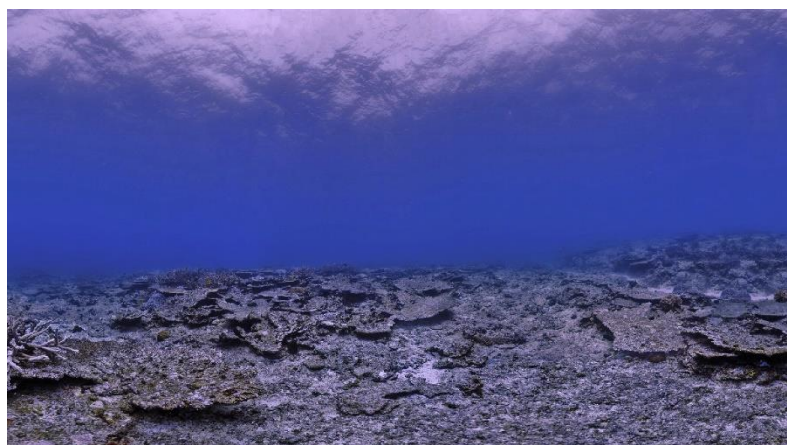
The cause for mass dying of coral reefs is climate change. Most of the extra heat trapped by greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is transferred into the ocean. In fact, if the ocean did not do such a good job at keeping the Earth cool, the average surface temperature would already be 50° Celsius by now. Corals, however, are extremely sensitive to change of the water temperature. A rise by only 2-3° Celsius can already be fatal, causing the coral to bleach and die within months. Coral bleaching and other forms of stress reaction such as fluorescing (which means that the coral changes to very bright colours, using them as natural sun protection) have been documented all over the world.

In the last 30 years, already 50 percent of the world's coral population have been lost due to this phenomenon. It is a man-made problem demanding a man-made solution very soon, before it is too late.

The following pictures are to give an idea about the situation:



Healthy coral reef



Dead coral reef



Airport Reef (Bali) 6 months apart; left: healthy, right: bleached



corals fluorescing



before



after

