

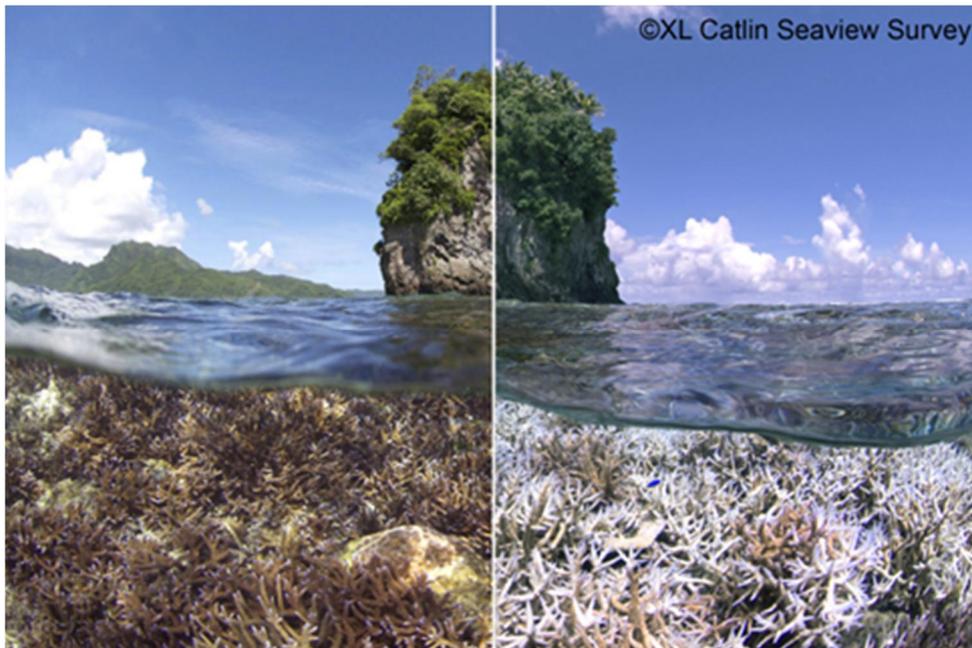


Press release

Thursday 3rd of December 2015

Our seas are gradually deteriorating due to climate change

The international conservation organization WWF sends an SOS warning concerning coral reefs and oceans. Through a series of underwater photos and videos from around the world, it is now proven in a tangible way, for the first time, that climate change is one of the principal causing mechanisms behind the deterioration of aquatic ecosystems. This constitutes another striking warning sign amidst the deliberations of the COP 21 Sustainable Innovation Forum being held in Paris this week.



Download full details [here](#), as published by the [XL Catlin Seaview Survey](#).

According to a [recent study](#) conducted by WWF, $\frac{3}{4}$ of coral reefs worldwide are under threat. Between 1979 and 2010 there has been a **34% reduction in coral reefs**, whereas, according to recent scientific predictions, if climatic change progresses at the current pace, corals will be completely extinct by the year 2050. The alarming extent of the problem can be easily understood, when one considers that 25% of the worldwide fish population inhabits these ecosystems while 850 million people rely directly on the economic, social and cultural outputs stemming from them.

Greece is a country that is not unaffected by the consequences of climate change. This is the reason why through the CYCLADES LIFE project, WWF Greece wants to send - both nationally and worldwide- a message in favour of the protection of marine ecosystems, and ultimately, of our way of life.



WWF's message from the sea bottom of Gyaros. © George Rigoutsos/ WWF Greece

More than 50% of the sea bottom around Gyaros island in the Cyclades is covered by protected habitats such as Posidonia meadows and dense coral formations (coralligenous reefs). This highly important scientific finding is a proof of the unique importance of the "Natura 2000" area of Gyaros, and it highlights the need for establishing legislative measures for its protection. The relevant study carried out as part of the [CYCLADES LIFE](#) project that aims at **establishing a ground-breaking marine protected area model around Gyaros island, together with the local societies of Syros and Andros that will operate effectively for the benefit of both humans and the natural environment.**

As George Paximadis, the Marine Programme Officer for WWF Greece explains, *"Climatic change is often perceived as a somewhat distant occurrence. Nevertheless, it has immediate impact on our seas; for example, temperature increase has led to the arrival of invasive fish species in the Mediterranean such as the Puffer fish, which subsequently overturns the overall ecologic balance. Dead coral imagery witnessed nowadays is terrifying, since these corals provide habitat for thousands of marine organisms. Indeed the last thing we need is the richness of the Gyaros marine habitats to suffer the same fate"*.

Nikos Mantzaris, Climate and Energy Officer for WWF Greece adds, *"In order to successfully address climate change, we need to open our eyes to its consequences and make the connections. Greenhouse gas emissions, which in Greece are attributed by 35% to the use of lignite as fossil fuel, damage all living resources; from our health and way of life to the bottom of our oceans. Let us hope that this is the necessary wake up call for citizens and politicians to take action"*.

The CYCLADES LIFE project is being implemented by WWF Greece together with the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Decentralized Administrative Authority of the Aegean, the Development Corporation of the Cyclades SA, the Harokopio University of Athens, MOM/Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Monk Seal and the Italian Institute Tethys.

More information

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Notes for journalists:

See the attached photos from the sea bottom of Gyaros.

See the dedicated site of WWF to the COP21 [here](#), with continuous update on the news coming from Paris.

You can visit our website for more information: www.cycladeslife.gr

The project CYCLADES LIFE, “Integrated monk seal conservation of Northern Cyclades”, is being implemented with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation (<http://www.fpa2.com/home.html>)

