

[<=Back](#)



May/  
June 1998

### SEARCH



### TODAY'S PICKS

[Letters](#)  
[Must Read](#)  
[Net: Ponzi Scheme?](#)  
[Muggles in the Ozone](#)  
[Seattle, the Sequel](#)  
[Durst Case Scenario](#)  
[Shell Ads on MoJo](#)

### SPECIAL REPORTS

[East Timor](#)  
[Kosovo](#)  
[Action Atlas: Arms Sales](#)  
[Action Atlas: Coral Reefs](#)  
[CoinOp Congress](#)

### MOTHER JONES MAGAZINE

[Current Issue](#)  
[Back Issues](#)  
[Subscribe](#)  
[Reader Services](#)

### PHOTO FUND

[Grant Winners](#)  
[How to Apply](#)

### ABOUT MOJO

[About MoJo Wire](#)  
[Corrections](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[About Mother Jones](#)  
[Make a Gift](#)  
[Jobs](#)  
[Advertise](#)

# Reviving the Reefs

A coral's basic needs are simple: clear, temperate water; the elimination of poisons such as cyanide and excessive nutrient runoff; protection from fishermen, tourists, and boaters; and limits on coastal development.

Last year, activists declared 1997 the International Year of the Reef, launching a global public education campaign. Today, campaigns for responsible tourism and other "good reef practices" (such as placing mooring buoys in reef waters to prevent damage from heavy anchors) abound:

Contrary to popular wisdom, old ships, cars, and bicycles dumped into the ocean to serve as artificial reefs don't foster coral growth (the iron actually stimulates algae growth). **Reef Ball Development Group, based in Sarasota, Fla., has instead created reef balls, concrete structures with a pH level that corals prefer and a "Swiss cheese" design to allow young fish multiple escape routes from predators.**

- ✦ The Philippine fishing industry has lost more than 125,000 jobs due to reef degradation from cyanide fishing. The chemical stuns fish, enabling live capture for restaurants and aquarium retailers, but kills corals. In response, the International Marinelife Alliance established a government-endorsed, cyanide-free export certification program (similar to dolphin-safe tuna programs) in 1992. The program, which gives fishermen a higher price for cyanide-free fish, has decreased cyanide use by 40 percent.
- ✦ Once a year when the corals spawn at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, a half-dozen University of Texas divers descend to collect the bounty. Researchers take about 1,000 eggs and sperm and grow them on ceramic tiles in stainless steel racks bolted to the reef, where the test-tile babies begin forming colonies. Scientists hope to transfer them onto the reef to replace dying corals.

**FREE NEWSLETTER**

The MoJournal

Your e-mail here

Subscribe

- ⚡ Off the coast of India in the Maldive Islands, marine scientist Thomas Goreau and architect Wolf Hilbertz are developing a technology to grow reefs by sending a low-voltage electrical current through the water. This lowers the acidity level, making it easier for corals to deposit limestone.
- ⚡ An experiment with sea grass in Florida's Tampa Bay bodes well for corals. Huge increases in nitrogen levels from sewage runoff led to a 40 percent loss of sea grass, which, like corals, performs a vital role in near-shore waters and can be choked by blooming algae. Community groups pressured the state to enact tough water-quality standards, and within three years algae concentrations dropped dramatically. Today the bay is gaining 500 acres of sea grass a year.

—*Kate Rope***RESOURCES:**

**Coral Reef Alliance** 64 Shattuck Square, Suite 220, Berkeley, CA 94704; (510) 848-0110 ; <http://www.coral.org/> (For free information, call 888-CORAL-REEF.)

**Global Coral Reef Alliance** Dr. Tom Goreau, 324 Bedford Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514; (914) 238-8788 .

**International Marineline Alliance**, P.O. Box 12648, Ortigas Center Post Office; Pasig City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1600; (632) 631-4993; [imaphil@mnl.sequel.net](mailto:imaphil@mnl.sequel.net)

**Reef Ball Development Group**, P.O. Box 3349; Sarasota, FL 34230-3349; (941) 752-0169 .

**Reef Check**, Institute for the Environment and Sustainable Development; Research Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; Clearwater Bay, Kowloon, China; [www.ust.hk/~webrc/ReefCheck/reef.html](http://www.ust.hk/~webrc/ReefCheck/reef.html)

**Reef Relief**, 201 William St., P.O. Box 430, Key West, FL 33041; (305) 294-3100 ; <http://www.reefreleif.org/>

[<=Back](#)

Back to [Travel to Exotic Foreign Lands!...](#) | [Table of Contents](#)

---

[E-mail the Editors](#) | [Other Articles by Kate Rope](#) | [Mother Jones Archive](#)

[<=Back](#)

**MOJO** <sup>wire</sup>)

[About Us](#) [Subscribe](#) [MoJo World](#) [Archives](#) [Search](#)  
[Advertise](#) [Site Map](#)

Foundation for National Progress | All Rights Reserved | All letters to the editor are for publication and may be edited for length and clarity.