



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Scientists Raise Florida Corals Threatened by Disease

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Scientists have successfully bred a threatened **species** of **coral**, a coral rescue organization announced recently.

The breeding was part of a project that hopes to **restore** damaged **reefs** off the coast of Florida.

Coral reefs in Florida and the Caribbean Sea are being affected by stony coral tissue loss disease. The disease causes coral to lose its color and die after a period of time.

The Florida Coral Rescue Center is in part funded by the Disney Conservation Fund and Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida. It has bred hundreds of new rough cactus coral in recent weeks. The breeding center holds a total of 18 Florida coral species that are threatened.

Justin Zimmerman of the Florida Coral Rescue Center said there is a possibility "that you could return some of these corals to the wild." He added there is a possibility of saving "the species by doing that."

Stony coral tissue loss disease was first observed near Miami in 2014. By 2017, it had spread to Florida's northernmost reef and, later, past Key West to the south.

Coral infected with it die off at a rate of 66 to 100 percent.

That is deadlier for coral reefs than coral bleaching – a better-known event that is usually caused by higher water temperatures.

Stony coral tissue loss disease represents another threat to the world's coral reefs. They already face serious threats from climate change.

The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, or GCRMN, is supported by the United Nations and gathers information on coral reefs. The group said in October that 14 percent of the world's coral was lost between 2009 and 2018.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

*Brian Ellsworth and Julio-Cesar Chavez reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**species** – *n.* a group of animals or plants that are similar and can produce young animals or plants

**coral** – *adj.* a hard material formed on the bottom of the sea by the skeletons of small creatures

**restore** – *v.* to return (something) to an earlier or original condition by repairing it, cleaning it, etc.

**reef** – *n.* a long line of coral that lies in warm, shallow water