



MAP THE GIANTS

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BILLIONS OF CORAL COLONIES MIGHT DIE, POTENTIALLY INCLUDING THE MOST ENIGMATIC, RESISTANT AND OLD ONES: THE GIANT CORALS

MAP THE GIANTS. DISCOVERING THE BIGGEST CORAL COLONIES

**GIANT CORALS.
FUTURE MARINE
MONUMENTS.**

Coral reefs cover less than 1% of the whole ocean surface yet they host over 25% of all known marine species (Buddemeier R W 2004) representing the most biodiverse ecosystem in the world.

Coral reefs are under threat. They are projected with high confidence to decline by 70-90% with a 1.5°C of global warming, and there is a very high likelihood of species extinction and biodiversity loss (IPCC 2023). Moreover, Small Island Developing States such as the Maldives are amongst the regions at highest risk from climate-change (IPCC 2023).

Coral reefs are predicted to disappear by the end of the century, and with them all ecosystem services we rely on. In this alarming scenario, billions of coral colonies might die, potentially including the most enigmatic, resistant and old ones: THE GIANT CORALS. Those individuals, most likely very rare, have a twofold importance: they preserve unique information from a biological, genetic and paleoclimatic point of view since they have resisted for hundreds of years to environmental perturbations and, much like with Giant Sequoias in the United States or centenary tortoises, identification, research and protection of these iconic organisms may increase environmental conservation.

Map the Giants aims at discovering the biggest coral colonies in the Maldives to study them and to protect them. This project and this approach aim at creating a new atmosphere surrounding corals with the goal of global conservation

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MAP THE GIANTS

GIANT CORALS MIGHT HOLD INFORMATION ABOUT PAST OCEANOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND HELP US UNDERSTAND POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO FUTURE CHANGES

MAP THE GIANTS AIMS AT DISCOVERING THE BIGGEST CORAL COLONIES IN THE MALDIVES TO STUDY THEM AND TO PROTECT THEM

Scientists with different backgrounds will be able to conduct a multitude of researches on the colonies and the locations where they are found. Giant corals represent the ideal tools for tracing past oceanographic transformations, understanding their resistance to current stressors and modelling their responses to future environmental changes

These colonies, currently rare and somewhat unique, will have an invaluable role in the locations where they will be identified by turning them in areas with an enhanced value, important for conservation. Giant colonies, probably very old guardians of a unique resistance to climate-change, will thus become symbols of resilience against biodiversity loss, protection from human impacts, and fight against indifference to environmental conservation.

MAP THE GIANTS will engage with a wide audience: through citizen science and outreach, the general public will make a unique contribution in finding and reporting these specimens, amongst them tourists but also Maldivians. The idea is to make the general public more interested in corals and recreate the same feeling that one has when protecting a monument, of whatever nature it may be, and to turn corals into marine monuments"

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