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REPORTS OF MEETINGS

First Symposium on the Coral Reef Ecology of the Bahamas

The symposium on the Coral Reef Ecology of the Bahamas was held June 12 through 17, 1988, at the Bahamian Field Station on San Salvador Island, Bahamas. The Organizer of the symposium was Dr. Donald T. Gerace, Executive Director of the Bahamaian Field Station. Program Chairman was Dr. Philip Dustan, Associate Professor of Biology at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. The symposium was attended by both academic researchers concerned with coral reef ecology and conservation minded Bahamian dive shop owners.

Among the types of papers presented, most stressed the importance of monitoring reef vitality and the lack of standard techniques to do so. The importance of interactions between various types of reef and nonreef associated organisms and the coral animals was also suggested by a number of presentations.

In general, most, but not all, monitoring studies indicate a decline in vitality of coral reefs in the Caribbean area. The reasons for this general decline is not clear but seems to include both natural and anthropomophic-induced population variations in either the coral animals or in organisms associated with the reef community. Some of the associations suggested by presentors included *Diadema antillarum*, *Cyphoma gibbosum*, fish, seagrass beds, phytoplankton, algae and bacteria. In turn, the suggested cause of these disturbances may include physical damage due to neglegence or increasing water use, changes in land use patterns, and pollution due to ocean dumping of various toxic and recalcitrite materials.

The symposium ended with a summary discussion on mitigation and management of coral reef ecosystems. It was suggested that widespread education or public awareness and concern would be required to bring about attitude changes toward oceanic disposal. On a smaller scale, however, individuals and organizations can assume responsibility for specific reefs (*i.e.*, "adopt a reef").

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