Mediterranean ecosystem

Restoration sites

Coastal & marine

Assisting orange coral colonies in Spain

The Mediterranean is a biodiversity hotspot with 15,000 to 25,000 species, 60% unique, one third endemic (IUCN). Corals are widespread on it, although human impact has made them largely disappear. Global warming, marine litter, organic contamination, are seriously affecting them.

Maro-Cerro Gordo Marine Protected Area and Punta de la Mona Cliffs on the Mediterranean coast of Spain host well conserved populations of the orange coral in its westernmost distribution. The orange coral *Astroides calycularis* is internationally protected due to its narrow distribution, its sensitivity to environmental changes and anthropogenic disturbance.

Goals

Andalusia in Spain has been the first European region to be affected by *Rugulopteryx okamurae*, and through these actions, restoration tools for coral species related to marine protected areas can move forward. This project aims to be a referent for other areas both at regional, national and Mediterranean scale.

General information

SPAIN

Organisation
HyT (Hombre y Territorio)
MedCoral Program

Type of organisation
National Non-Government Organization (NGO)

Other community or local level interest group: scientists, marine protected area managers, divers, public administration officers, naturalists.

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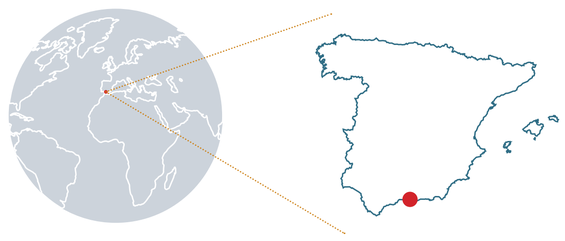
Site location



Maro-Cerro Gordo MPA
36°44'47.0"N, 3°46'54.0"W

Punta de la Mona Cliffs
36°43'25.7"N, 3°43'36.9"W

Implementation area
1654 ha

Corals planted
590

Scan the code for full description on Maro-Cerro Gordo MPA

Scan the code for full description on Punta de la Mona Cliffs

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> We believe these studies and initiatives have contributed to a better knowledge of orange coral and its importance as a species and also as a habitat among the different stakeholders we have work with. Also, when finished, results will be able to be transferred to local, regional and national authorities, MPA managers of the whole Mediterranean basin and IUCN Mediterranean Red List Office, through a proved tool to conserve coral species. The implementation of networking monitoring programmes and new routes for diving immersions will facilitate the application of targeted conservation actions to protect the species and their habitats.

Type of restoration intervention

- Assisted natural regeneration
- Control of invasive alien species

Main drivers of degradation

- Introduction of invasive species
- Climate change
- Infrastructure and industrial development and urbanization

What is the practice about

- HyT works with the orange coral since 2008 through the MedCoral Program. Several studies regarding its distribution, genetics, life cycle and threats have been developed.
- All this information has made it possible to generate several tools to restore their populations, if necessary.
- The Rescue and Rehabilitation (RNR) is based on the recovery and relocation of detached colonies from the bottom to their original substrate. This is a really effective and easy technique that allows to reduce the mortality rate when falling.
- The Harvesting and Seeding Larva (HSL) is an exclusive technique developed by MedCoral with the Seville Aquarium support for the species. It is based in the larval collection for a subsequent seeding. This technique generates new colonies with a unique genetic pool.
- These two techniques are being implemented both in natural and artificial substrates, using artificial reefs as reservoirs for the species.

Achievements and impact

- Several techniques have been tested and published with the University of Seville support.
- These techniques could be used in other marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Mediterranean, as tools to fight the invasion of *Rugulopteryx okamurae*.
- More than 500 colonies (about 30.000 polyps) have been rescued and recovered in both areas.
- About 700 larvae have been harvested and seeded both in natural and artificial substrates, also in controlled conditions.
- A better knowledge around the importance of corals and interaction with the local communities have been accomplished.

Scan the code for more information about Mediterranean Ecosystem Restoration sites

UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION 2021-2030

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