



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# Coral bleaching

**Updated: 12 April 2016**

Extensive in-water and aerial surveys have detected severe bleaching on reefs as far south as offshore Mackay, however the proportion of severely bleached reefs is greatest in the north, especially north of Port Douglas.

While low level coral mortality has been observed as far south as offshore Townsville, observations of severe coral mortality have so far been restricted to the Far Northern Management Area.

Bleaching occurs when live corals are stressed from overheating. If the waters cool down quickly enough, the corals can survive, but if the corals remain stressed for many weeks, they will die off.

Although there was substantial cloud cover and rain over parts of the Great Barrier Reef in March, this did not have a sufficient cooling effect on sea temperatures to relieve heat stress.

Reef-wide assessments and analyses of bleaching will take several weeks to complete. As the event is still unfolding, it may take several weeks until the full impact is known.

A map is available summarising the observed bleaching.

The Reef continues to experience heat stress, with sea surface temperatures remaining significantly warmer than average for April.

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## Frequently asked questions

Find answers to your questions about bleaching on the Reef.

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## Current conditions on the Reef

Summary and detailed information on sea surface temperature, tropical cyclones, rainfall levels and flood plumes to date.

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## Coral bleaching resources

Coral bleaching resources: Image gallery, bleaching infographic, informative video and observed bleaching map.

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## Report your sightings

Download the free Eye on the Reef smart phone app from iTunes/Google play app store or you can use the desktop app to report your Reef sightings.

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## **Coral bleaching fact sheet**

Find out how and why coral bleaching occurs.

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## **Coral Bleaching Response Plan**

The Coral Bleaching Response Plan was developed to meet the challenge of responding to coral bleaching events.

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## **Sea surface forecasts**

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology provides information on sea surface temperatures for monitoring coral bleaching.

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## **ReefTemp**

ReefTemp Next Generation is a set of high resolution mapping products that provide information on coral bleaching risk for the Great Barrier Reef region.

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## **Information for reef managers**

Our e-library contains publications on reef health and management, including the 2014 Outlook Report and strategic assessment.

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## **Student and teacher resources**

Educational materials, including teaching units and a poster series, for primary and secondary school students.