
Volume 69, Number 1
DAO SPECIAL 1, 2006

Published March 23, 2006

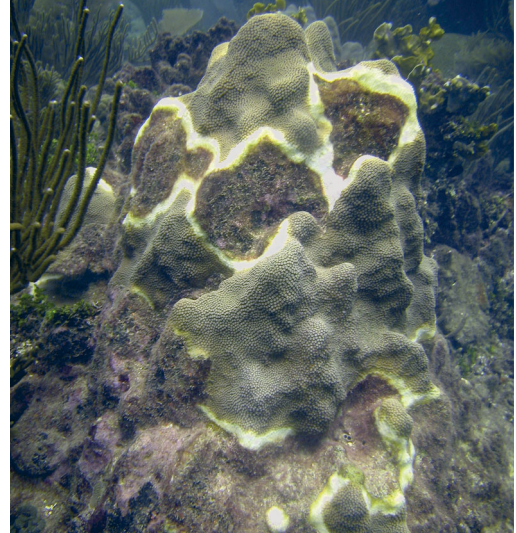
Current Advances in Coral Reef Disease Research

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*Yellow blotch syndrome is a widespread, pervasive and highly damaging infection in the Caribbean region. This colony of *Montastraea faveolata* in Puerto Rico has lost over 50% of its live cover in 16 months.*

© Photo by Ernesto Weil

Coral reefs are one of the principal ecosystems of our planet, as they line one-quarter of the world's coasts and constitute a hot spot of biodiversity. But corals are today in a state of decline: concomitant with intensifying anthropogenic impacts, they are increasingly affected by epizootics which result in mass mortalities.

This first DAO SPECIAL presents the latest advances in research on coral pathology. The authors review the microbial communities associated with corals, the role of viruses,

bacteria and ciliates in the etiology of coral diseases, and their overall effects on coral populations.

We have a long way to go in the elaboration of management strategies for the preservation of the coral reef ecosystem. The information in this DAO SPECIAL, however, will contribute towards the development of epidemiological models of disease in coral reefs, and thus represents a significant advance.

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