

Why Cuba's Coral Reefs Have Endured Climate Change and Offer Hope to the Rest of the World

Warming seas are devastating coral reefs. But besides warming, there are other equally critical factors at play. Cuba's healthy reefs offer insight and hope.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, July 28, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Since 1970, the world has lost half its [coral reefs](#). Marine scientist, conservation leader, and ocean explorer Dr. David E. Guggenheim has had a front-row seat to this disaster. After decades of watching reefs deteriorate, Guggenheim was astonished to come face-to-face with [Cuba's](#) remarkably healthy coral reefs, which sit in the same hot water as the devastated coral reefs of the Florida Keys, just 90 miles away.



Healthy Elkhorn Coral and a Trumpet Fish in Cuba's Isle of Youth

Why are Cuba's ocean waters so healthy while just 90 miles away, the reefs of the Florida Keys are 80 to 90 percent dead? The answer is, in part, an accident of history, deeply entwined with Cuba's extraordinary and singularly unique history. But it is also the result of the country's strong environmental laws, influenced by an unlikely partner: Jacques Cousteau.

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When I nearly gave up hope that coral reefs would survive to the end of the 21st century, Cuba came to my emotional rescue. I behold thriving coral reefs healthier than those I remember as a teenager.”

David E. Guggenheim

While the public is primarily focused on climate change as the cause of the death of coral reefs and the spectacle of sudden coral bleaching, science shows that local factors, such as controlling nutrient pollution, overfishing, coastal development, and other factors can be just as crucial to coral health. For decades these factors have been part of a

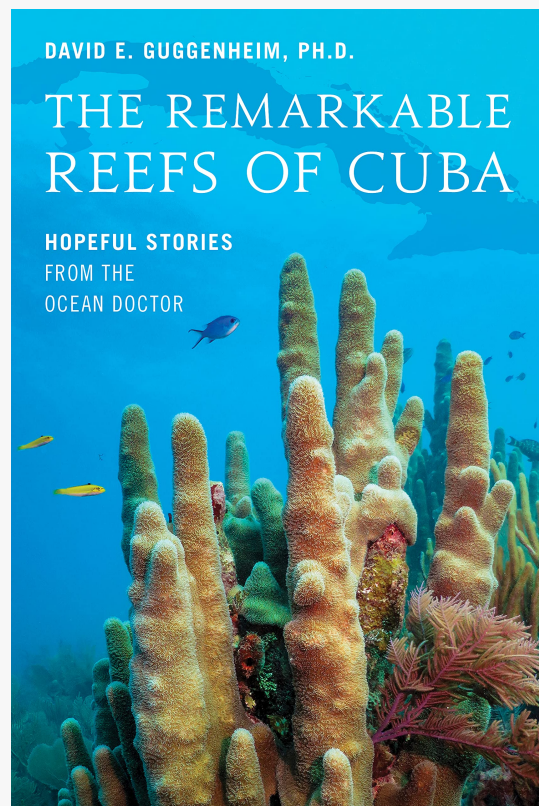
slow-motion disaster that the public is largely unaware of. The lessons of Cuba and its unique

history offer a hopeful message: Taking care of such local factors can help corals become more resilient to the effects of climate change. In other words, while controlling climate change will take decades, engendering a feeling of hopelessness, there are meaningful actions we can take now to make a difference for coral reefs.

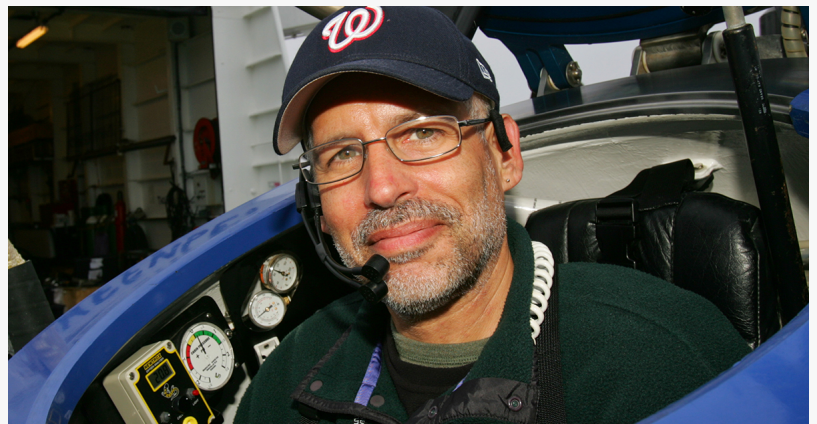
The lessons from Cuba are documented in Guggenheim's new book, "The [Remarkable Reefs of Cuba](#): Hopeful Stories From the Ocean Doctor," described by Michael Hill in the current issue of Johns Hopkins University Arts & Sciences Magazine, as "a book that is everything from an autobiography of a life spent in service to the world's oceans...to a very accessible explanation of the delicate balance required to maintain undersea ecosystems, to a history of post-Castro Cuba's politics and agriculture, to an at times hilarious explication of the Kafka-like bureaucracies one encounters as a U.S. citizen trying to work in Cuba."

Dr. Guggenheim is an ocean explorer, conservation leader, marine scientist, submersible pilot, educator, and award-winning author. He is the founder and president of the Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization Ocean Doctor, dedicated to protecting and restoring the world's oceans. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Johns Hopkins University, where he authored and teaches the university's first graduate-level course on ocean stewardship and conservation. Guggenheim has worked in Cuba for more than 20 years leading collaborative research and conservation efforts focused on coral reef ecosystems. He has been featured on 60 Minutes, Good Morning America, CNN, MSNBC, PBS NewsHour, NPR, and in the New York Times.

Previously he served as Vice President of the Ocean Conservancy, President and CEO of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Co-Chair of the Everglades Coalition, President of the Friends



Book Cover: "The Remarkable Reefs of Cuba: Hopeful Stories from the Ocean Doctor"



Dr. David E. Guggenheim preparing for launch in the DeepWorker submersible

of Channel Islands National Park, and Board Chair of the Great Whale Conservancy. Guggenheim was inducted into the Explorers Club as a National Fellow in 2008.

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