



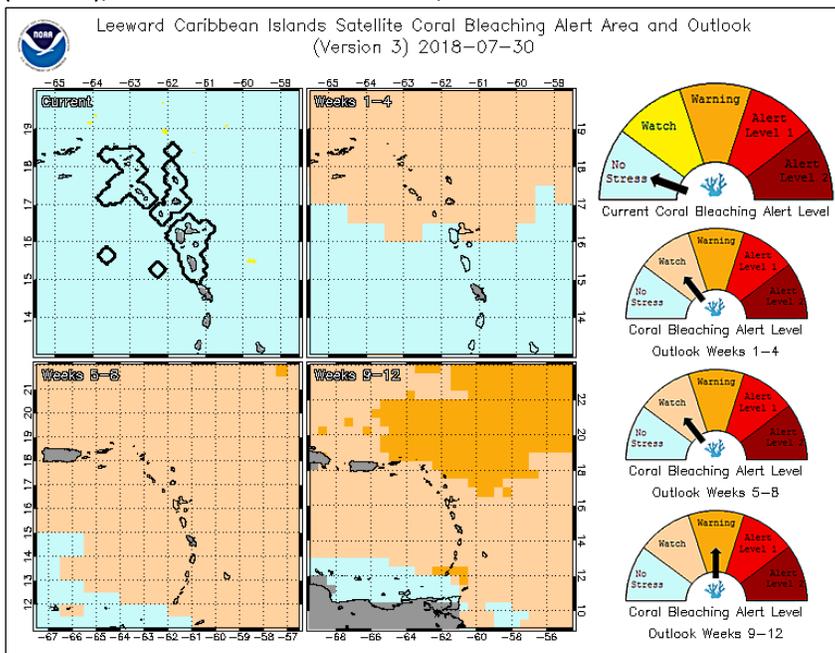
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA CORAL REEF WATCH



Heat stress will likely accumulate on corals - bleaching possible

Situation and forecast

Preliminary data indicate that sea surface temperature (SST) around Antigua and Barbuda was near normal for July. If this is confirmed, it would be the third consecutive month of near normal SST, after 33 uninterrupted months of being above normal, based on the climate period 1981-2010. The mean SST for the month was around 28.3 °C (82.9 °F). This is the lowest since 2015, and below the **bleaching threshold** of 29.3 °C (84.7 °F). Hence, no stress for corals. Overall, the SST increased by 0.4 °C (0.72 °F) since June, which is twice what normally obtains. The record high SST for the area for July is 29.2 °C (84.6 °F),-observed in 2010 and 2005, based on NOAA's ERSTv4.



A watch is expected for the forecast period – **August to November**, and a warning is likely. This means, at least, low-level **thermal stress** will take place and coral bleaching is possible (see update).

The rest of the region

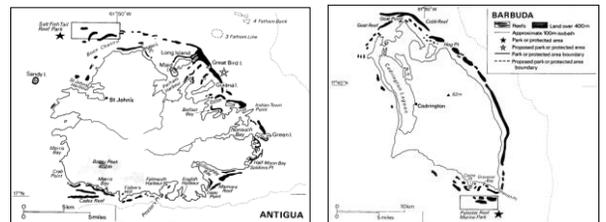
Heat stress is accumulating across some coastal areas of **Cuba and the southern Bahamas**. Elsewhere, there is no or low heat stress, but this will change over the upcoming **weeks and months**. Most areas will go under, at least, a watch. See **Caribbean Coral Reef Watch** for more.

Rats are bad for coral reefs

A recent study by **Graham et al.** of Lancaster University, UK showed that rats are bad for coral reefs. In his paper titled “Seabirds enhance coral reef productivity and functioning in the absence of invasive rats”, published by **Nature**, Graham revealed that seabirds play a very important role in providing important nutrients for corals. The source of the nutrients is the birds’ dung, which gets to the reefs via runoffs. However, since rats prey on the eggs of these birds, it has a knock-on effect on corals; hence, the reason why rats are deemed bad for corals. Graham recommends that, “rat eradication on oceanic islands should be a high conservation priority as it is likely to benefit terrestrial ecosystems and enhance coral reef productivity and functioning...”. [Read more...](#)

Why should we care?

Coral reefs are especially important given their immeasurable contribution to tourism, fisheries, leisure and disaster risk reduction. Click on the maps below to see the location of our coral reefs:



Related resources:

- [Recent 30-day SST anomaly animation](#)
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[NOAA Coral Reef Watch methodology](#)

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