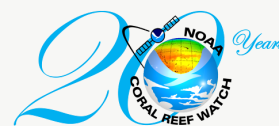




Philippines



Overview of 26 dive sites. Figures are averages across the sites that report them (n = sites with a value); each site's own page has its individual values. Regional summaries: [Luzon](#), [Palawan](#), [Visayas](#).



Coral Health Index: TBD



Photo: Anderson Mayfield/Coral Reef Diagnostics — [Philippines](#) - Port Barton, Palawan: island-hopping stop 1 (San Miguel area)

COUNTRY

Philippines

SITES

26

each linked below

HARD CORAL COVER
(OVERVIEW MEAN)

27% ± 8.0% (std. dev.)

n = 18 of 26 sites. range 15–43%

WATER TEMP. DURING
SURVEYS (OVERVIEW MEAN)

27.8°C

CORAL HEALTH INDEX
(OVERVIEW MEAN)

not yet scored

n = 0 of 26 sites

MOST RECENT WATER
TEMPERATURE RECORD

29.1°C

16 Sep 2026 · [Central Philippines](#)

n = 13 of 26 sites; surveyed Sep
2016–Jan 2017

MOST RECENT HEAT STRESS RECORD



3.5°C-weeks

16 Sep 2026 · below alert level

MEAN ANNUAL MAX DEGREE HEATING WEEKS (DHW), LAST 5 YEARS

5.1°C-weeks

2021–2025 · regional mean of 26
sites, 3 stations

HIGHEST ANNUAL HEAT STRESS

15.1°C-weeks 🔥

in 2020 · Central Philippines

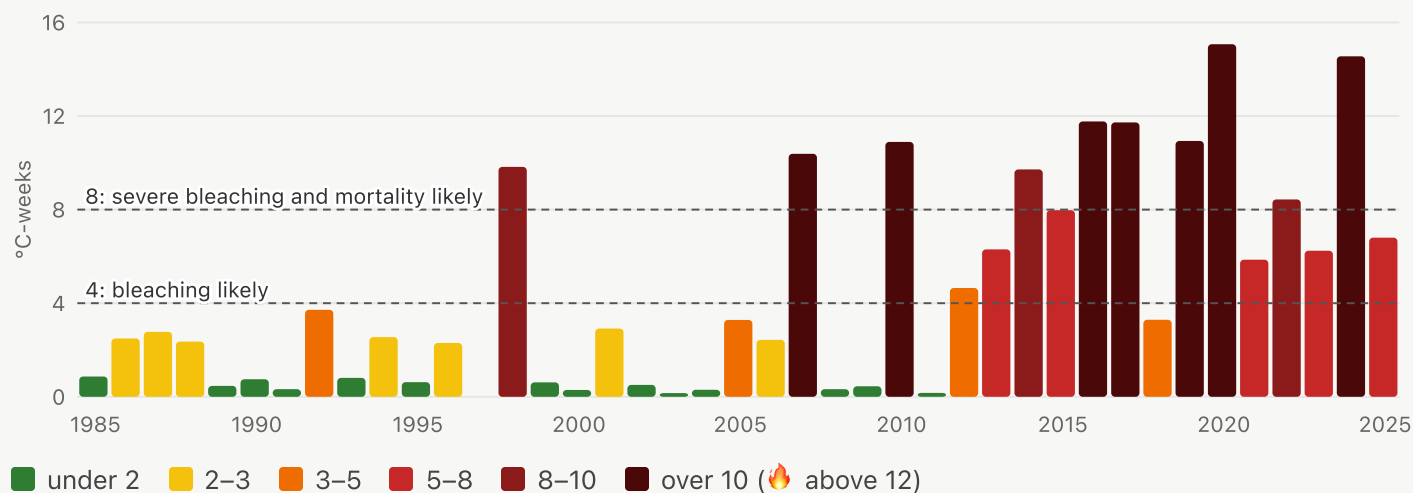
SEVERE HEAT-STRESS YEARS

10

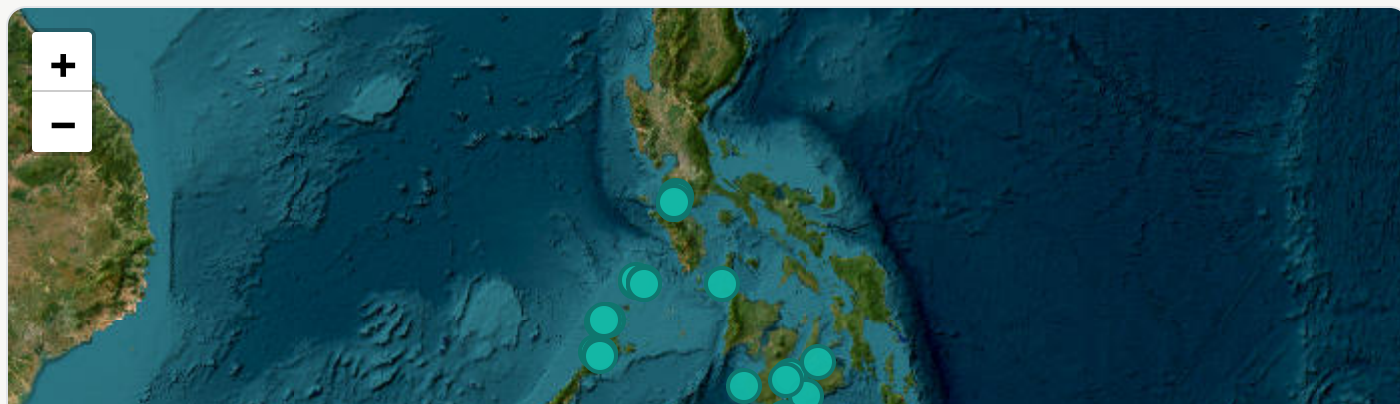
1985–2025 · 6 in the last 10 years

Heat-stress figures: [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) — [Central Philippines](#) and Eastern Philippines, Western Philippines 5-km virtual stations. Each pill links its source record and carries the values behind it.

Heat stress, 1985–2025



Annual maximum Degree Heating Weeks, [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) 5-km virtual stations: Central Philippines, Eastern Philippines, Western Philippines (highest station each year). DHW ≥ 4: bleaching likely; ≥ 8: severe bleaching and mortality likely. Download the annual DHW data (CSV): [eastern-philippines](#), [palawan-north-borneo](#).





26 sites in this region — click a marker to open that site.

Overview

Spalding et al. (2001) place the Philippines, with [Indonesia](#), at the center of global coral reef biodiversity, and estimate the country's reef area at 25,060 km², with 421 coral species recorded and 577 estimated for its biogeographic region. The three areas on this page are very different parts of it. Around Luzon they found reefs far from continuous, with none in the far northwest, the first fringing reefs at the Hundred Islands in the Lingayen Gulf, and discontinuous fringing reefs in the south, notably at Puerto Galera on Mindoro; ash and mudflows from the Mount Pinatubo eruption cut live coral cover on the nearest fringing reefs from 60–70% to 10–20%. Palawan's reefs they rank among the most fully developed in the country, with fringing and patch reefs along most of its coast, live cover reported at 50–90% in places, offshore banks thought to belong to a long submerged barrier reef, and the two atoll systems of the Cagayan Islands and Tubbataha in the Sulu Sea. The Visayas are a close-set group of islands around the Visayan Sea, fringed along much of their coast and broken by soft sediment near river mouths, and home to the small reserves at Apo Island and Sumilon, cited as globally recognized models of community-based management. The same account rated 97% of the country's reefs as at risk from human activity.

This page gathers 26 pins in three units, from three separate trips. The Visayas unit holds seven pins from recreational dives in February 2013 around Moalboal and Pescador Island off western [Cebu](#), Mactan Island beside Cebu City, Alona Beach on Panglao and Balicasag Island off Bohol, Apo Island off Negros, Punta Ballo at Sipalay, and Boracay. Luzon holds seven dives on 30 September and 1 October 2016, four around Anilao and three in the Verde Island Passage. Palawan holds twelve visited between 20 and 28 January 2017 in three areas: Port Barton, the Bacuit Archipelago off El Nido, and Busuanga and Coron Island. Logged maximum depths, where they exist, ran from 12.8 m on the Anilao night dive to 34.4 m on the *Akikushima* wreck at Coron. The record is unevenly built: the Visayas pins rest on Anderson's dive logs alone, because every surviving frame from that trip is topside, while the Luzon and Palawan pins have photographs and photo-derived cover.

Photo-derived cover exists for 18 of the 26 pins and averaged 27.0%, from 14.7% on the *Taiei Maru* oil tanker wreck at Coron to 43.4% at the second Port Barton island-hopping stop. Palawan read slightly higher (28.0%, $n = 12$) than Luzon (24.9%, $n = 6$), and the Visayas have no

value at all. *Acropora* and plating corals define the best reefs. The first Port Barton island-hopping stop had vast monospecific staghorn and tabulate *Acropora* thickets beside an unbroken pavement of violet-edged foliose plating coral, with massive *Porites* bommies between them; Abdens at El Nido had broad fields of tabular plates, one several meters across; Sombrero Island in the Verde Island Passage had enormous tabular *Acropora* plates meters across with columnar *Porites*. Elsewhere the community is soft. Ligpo Island off Anilao carries dense *Dendronephthya*, *Sarcophyton* and pulsing *Xenia* fields among barrel sponges, and Beatriz Island is defined by very large barrel sponges, black coral bushes and gorgonian fans. Three of the 26 pins are wrecks, where the cover figure indexes hull colonization rather than reef.

No site in the set showed a reef-wide bleaching signal, but localized flags recur across both photographed units. At Anilao a stand of stark-white branching *Acropora* at Dive and Trek, a stark-white colony and a partly bleached host anemone at Ligpo Island, and a partially bleached colony at Monte Carlo; in Palawan a partially bleached colony at the second Port Barton stop, scattered white patches or recent-mortality spots at Paglugaban Rocks and Coral Gardens, a small white patch at Abdens, several conspicuously pale colonies on the *Alberguin* wreck, and a *Seriatopora* photographed and labeled dying at Nat Nat. The clearest damage in the set is older. Reef 1 near Port Barton town is extensive standing dead branching *Acropora*, algal-colonized and breaking to rubble, with small live recruits growing on the dead branches, and one frame captioned 'pollution damaged reef'. In the Visayas logs the pressures are specific rather than photographed: tabular acroporids overturned at Arco Point by a strong typhoon about two months before the February 2013 dives, and a Sipalay fish assemblage that appeared severely overfished despite good coral structure.

The Visayas logs are also where the strongest coral in the set is described, without a number attached to any of it. Talisay at Moalboal was the dive Anderson rated best of the trip for coral, close to continuous and genus-rich; the Sambaguita shallows at 3-4 m were near-continuous branching *Porites*; the Balicasag Sanctuary wall carried the most coral he had then seen on one dive; and at Marigondon Cave on Mactan the log calls the hard coral cover and diversity striking given how close the site is to Cebu City. Set against that, Wilkinson (2006) reported Philippine reefs in continuing decline as of 2004, under overfishing and destructive fishing, land-based pollution, sediment from coastal development and reclamation, with only 10-20% of Southeast Asia's more than 630 marine protected areas effectively managed. Souter et al. (2021) estimate that hard coral cover across the East Asian Seas dropped to 35% by 2012 after the 2010 mass bleaching and to 33.9% in 2017 after the 2016 event, before recovering to about 36.8% in 2019.

Highlights

- Port Barton island-hopping stop 1: vast staghorn and tabulate *Acropora* thickets beside an unbroken pavement of violet-edged foliose plating coral, and the set's hero image.

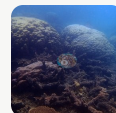


photo: Philippines - Port

Barton, Palawan: island-hopping stop 1 (San Miguel area)

- The highest photo-derived index in the set, 43.4%, at the second Port Barton island-hopping stop; the lowest, 14.7%, on the *Taiei Maru* wreck at Coron.
- Sombrero Island (Verde Island Passage): tabular *Acropora* plates meters across with columnar *Porites*.

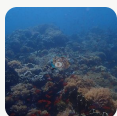


photo: Philippines - Verde Island Passage: Sombrero Island

- Abdens (El Nido): continuous fields of tabular *Acropora*, one table several meters across; Paglugaban Rocks, one of Anderson's favorite Philippine dives, for genus diversity on a rocky fore reef.

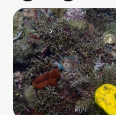


photo: Philippines - El Nido: Paglugaban Rocks (Bacuit Archipelago)

- Talisay at Moalboal, the dive Anderson rated best of the February 2013 trip for coral, and the Balicasag Sanctuary wall, which he called the most coral he had seen on a single dive to that point.
- Reef 1 near Port Barton town: extensive standing dead branching *Acropora* breaking to rubble, with small live recruits on the dead branches; one frame captioned 'pollution damaged reef'.

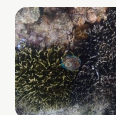


photo:

Philippines - Port Barton, Palawan: Reef 1 (bay snorkel)

- Two WWII wrecks at Coron, the *Akikushima* and *Taiei Maru*, colonized by *Euphyllia*, *Plerogyra* and foliose corals, and an intact *Acropora* table on a beam.
- A giant clam restocking garden across several size classes at the Dive and Trek sanctuary, and deployed coral settlement tiles at Monte Carlo Hotel.

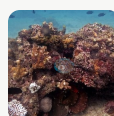
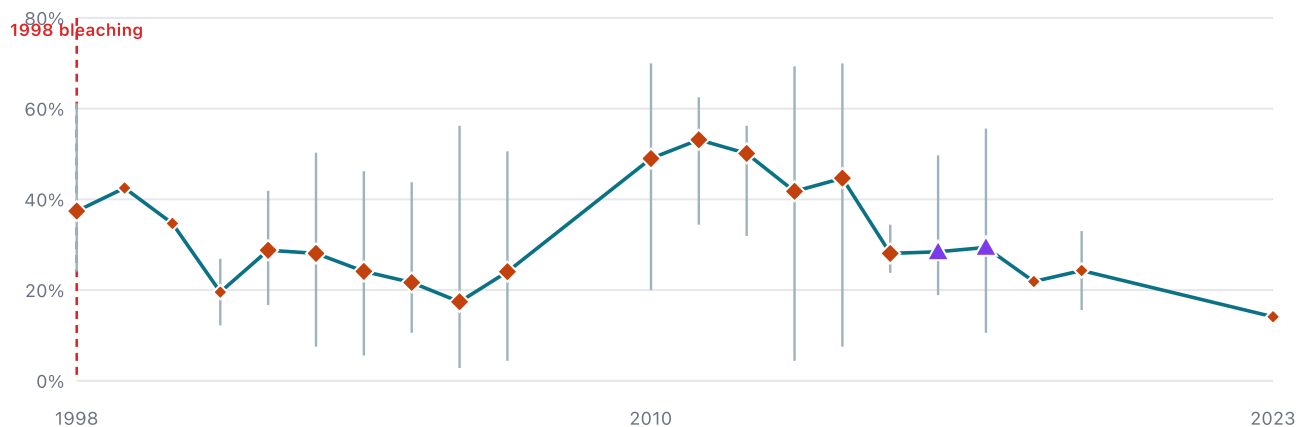


photo: Philippines - Anilao: Monte Carlo Hotel

► Notable observations (12)

Coral cover over time (pooled)

One point per year: the mean of every hard coral cover value available for this region that year — Anderson's own dives and every independent survey station within 5 km of them. The vertical bar is the full range behind that mean. Different programs use different methods at different stations, so this is a regional summary, not a single comparable series. Three values above 70% were excluded as best-patch figures rather than site means. Years resting on fewer than three values are drawn as smaller points (1999, 2000, 2001, 2018, 2019, 2023). Non-CRD points are from [Reef Check Foundation](#). Marker shape: ● his own dives, ◆ other organizations' surveys, ▲ a mix of both, that year.



► Sites in this region (26)

Nearby external survey stations

149 independent survey records within 5 km of a site in this region (deduplicated across sites).

► Show all 149 records

All images from [Coral Reef Diagnostics](#). Data are from Coral Reef Diagnostics and [Reef Check Foundation](#).



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