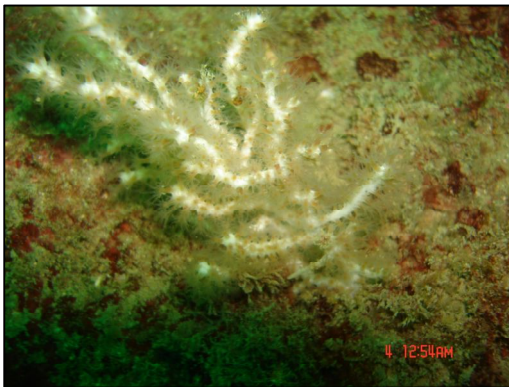




REPORT ON CORAL REEFS SURVEY ALONG MAKRAN COAST



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Background

A field mission of the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP), lead by coral expert from Millport University, UK, identified the first ever coral reef ecosystem near the Astola Island in 2006. An expedition team comprising of PWP divers headed by Lt. Cdr (Rtd) Tariq Mahmood PADI Instructor under the supervision of Ahmad Khan Director Regional Programme, conducted a survey of the possible coral sites in February, 2011 and discovered large area of deep sea corals near Gwadar. The coral colonies occurring at the Cher Koh, Baladi Koh and Ganjabad were mostly in growing stage and presented a healthy condition. The survey was conducted late in winter season and therefore detailed investigations were not possible. Encouraged by this break through a detailed assessment along entire Makran coast was carried out in the month of November/December 2011. During this survey diving search was conducted on the potential sites of Jiwani, Daran, Gwadar, Astola, Ormara and Ras Malan. It was discovered that coral reefs are present all along Makran coast.

Coral Reefs are the most diverse communities on the planet. These tropical marine communities occupy less than 1 % of the ocean floor, but are inhabited by at least 25% of all marine species and form the nurseries for about a quarter of the ocean fish. Scientists estimate that 19 percent of the world's coral reefs are already dead and if remedial measures are not taken at this stage than this precious resource may be lost within the next 30 to 50 years. Coral reefs are found in about 100 countries where as reefs of 93 countries have been damaged. In the last few decades over 35 million acres of Coral Reefs have been obliterated. Sea pollution, sedimentation, improper and over fishing, climate change, acidification of sea, depletion of ozone, rise of sea temperature and unplanned coastal buildup and tourism are the major causes for coral bleaching and damage.

Whilst there is currently much guidance available on how to protect the corals, there is almost nothing that has been done in Pakistan. The country is having a coastline of 1030Kms with 6th biggest Delta/mangrove forest, lagoons, bays, estuaries, ideally located islands, atolls and beautiful nude beaches but the marine waters are mostly unexplored. This perspective poses a key question – how do we manage these coral reef sites? The need to address this question has led to a new partnership amongst a group of governance experts, planners and managers to initiate development of guidance on establishing and governing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Pakistan. The core strategic efforts should be, to develop innovative approaches and capacity for implementation of ecosystem-based management and governance of marine and coastal ecosystems and resources. It is anticipated that this report will lead to the development of summary guidance for MPA managers and policy makers based on further and more in-depth case studies. It represents a minor contribution to debate about how MPAs can be beneficial for various organizations which are directly or indirectly linked with marine biology. As of 2010, the world hosted more than 5,880 MPAs, encompassing 1.17% of the world's oceans where as we have not taken a start as yet.

