



PASS ON PARROTFISH

SAVING REEFS BY PROTECTING PARROTFISH

**NEWS FROM THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CARIBBEAN MARINE BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM**

WHY PARROTFISH?

The #PassOnParrotfish campaign encourages people not to sell or consume parrotfish because of the important role they have in maintaining coral reef health. Why does this matter? Parrotfish spend 90% of their day cleaning the reef of algae. This cleaning (eating) helps corals grow and thrive, and healthy reefs support more fish in the sea. Parrotfish also contribute to the sand on our Caribbean beaches. They snack on the hard parts of coral which becomes a white sandy material in their stomachs that they leave behind on the reef. Who doesn't love a sandy beach?

Photo: Tim Calver

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program is a five-year project (2014-2019), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and carried out by The Nature Conservancy, that aims to achieve sustained biodiversity conservation, maintain and restore critical ecosystems, and realize tangible improvements in human and community wellbeing.

LET THEM CLEAN THE REEF

Overfishing of parrotfish throughout the Caribbean is having a negative impact on the health of coral reefs because these species play a critical role in maintaining reef health. This publication documents initiatives conducted by the Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program and its partners. Working together unites us in the effort to sustain parrotfish.

Photo: Tim Calver

VIVA EL PEZ LORO

THE DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

On June 19, 2017, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic made history by declaring a 2-year fishing ban on parrotfish, and a longer ban on other ecologically important marine life like sharks. This is an important step towards conserving the parrotfish and the coral reefs that they protect from algae overgrowth.

The Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program is proud to contribute to the outreach campaigns promoting parrotfish protection. "We've worked closely with local governments and conservation partners to help educate communities and fishers about the importance of protecting these species to preserve marine biodiversity and prevent reef degradation" The Nature Conservancy posted on its Caribbean Facebook page.

Our program is dedicated to continuing education and outreach in the Dominican Republic. While the ban is a positive step forward, the local communities still need support and encouragement in this transitional phase towards more sustainable fishing practices and alternatives to parrotfish.



Photo: JP Zegarra



HAITI WORKING TO INCREASE PARROTFISH POPULATIONS

Throughout Haiti, overharvesting of juvenile fish has been a critical issue for years. Important reef-cleaning fish such as parrotfish are harvested frequently and in large volumes. The Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program, together with fisher associations and government agencies, is working to reduce overharvesting of juvenile fish and better manage the country's fisheries. The Program is supporting the establishment of fishery replenishment zones in the Protected Area of Three Bays (PA3B) to increase protection of spawning and nursery areas; promoting the use of

larger mesh nets when fishing; and conducting outreach and education initiatives to encourage sustainable fishing practices. These efforts will continue to help rebound Haiti's fisheries, preserve its natural resources and improve Haitian livelihoods.



Top Photo: Tim Calver, Bottom Photo: Catherin Cattafesta/TNC

AN NOU PWOTEJE PWASON PEROKE!

Let us protect parrotfish



Photo: Tim Calver

MORE PARROTFISH, BETTER REEFS



Local Jamaican fisher Donald "Dave" Valentine knows that parrotfish are important to a healthy coral reef. "Parrotfish are our reef cleaners," he says. "Leave them on the reef to go on eating". Dave does not stand alone. Fishers in the Dominican Republic rally behind the "Salvemos el pez loro" ("*Save the parrotfish*") battle cry that many local environmental organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, are promoting on the island. The Conservancy's Giselle Hall interviewed Iris Manuel Boyer, President of the Grupo Cooperativo de Produccion, Trabajo y Servicios Múltiples de Pescadores Bahía de San Lorenzo (COPESAN), who said, "We need to take care of our coral reefs, and for that we need to conserve parrotfish."

JAMAICA

RACING TO SAVE PARROTFISH

In July 2016, Sandals Resorts International announced it will no longer purchase or offer parrotfish at its resorts. Sandals also launched a campaign "Save The Parrotfish, Save Our Islands" in Jamaica to educate local communities on the benefits of parrotfish.

The Nature Conservancy and Sandals have established a partnership to help sustain parrotfish under the Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program. Through this partnership, both the Conservancy and Sandals will organize a forum with stakeholders to discuss sustainable fishing practices that would allow parrotfish to play their role as a reef cleaner and a food source for other fish. Working together to enact real change is vital to sustaining our fisheries.



Photos: Chelsea Tuohy

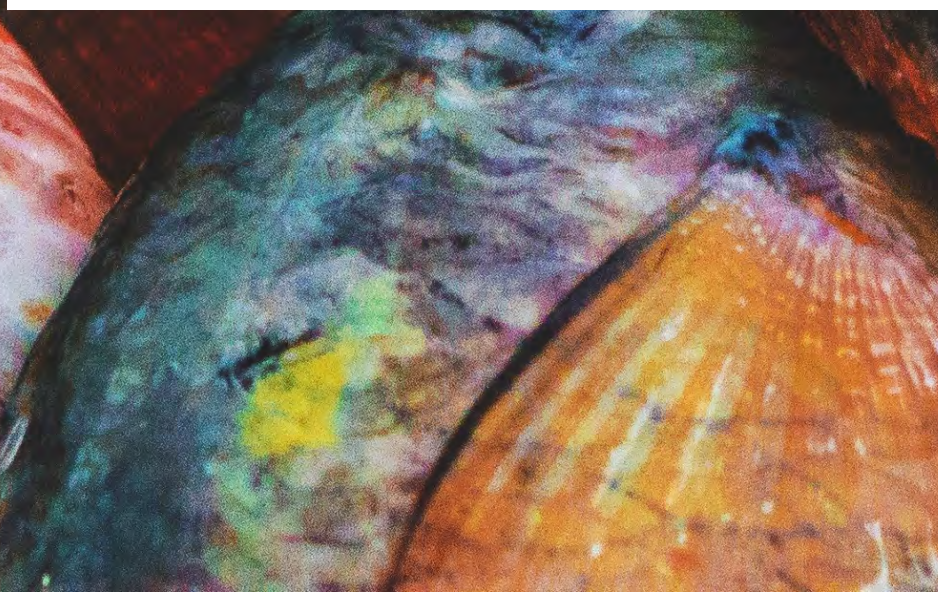


Photo: Chelsea Tuohy



Photo: Ken Marks

SIZE MATTERS

Small parrotfish are food for larger fish we like to eat, such as groupers, while large parrotfish keep the reef clean of algae. We need both sizes for a healthy parrotfish population. Let us choose an alternative to eat and keep parrotfish off the plate. The Conservancy is working with local partners to find alternatives to fishing parrotfish.

Photo: Tim Calver

STUDYING PARROTFISH

IN JAMAICA

In 2015, The Nature Conservancy's Danielle Kitson evaluated social perceptions of parrotfish in Jamaica while completing her Master of Science in Natural Resource Management.

Kitson interviewed consumers and vendors to understand what drives them to eat or buy parrotfish. According to her surveys, about 50% of respondents listed parrotfish as their favorite fish. Of all those surveyed who eat parrotfish, 95% said they would be willing to eat a different fish if parrotfish were not available and after learning the importance of parrotfish to reefs.

This finding shows that Jamaicans are willing to consider an alternative to this overfished reef cleaner. Consumers can make a difference and help save parrotfish by reducing demand for it.



Left:
Danielle
Kitson



Photo: Nathalie Zenny / TNC

LOCAL CAMPAIGN NEWS: CEBSE & FUNDEMAR

Our partner in the Dominican Republic, the Center for Conservation and Eco-Development of Samaná Bay and Its Surroundings (CEBSE), has entered the race to save parrotfish by launching their own parrotfish outreach and education campaign.

CEBSE will promote voluntary compliance with regulations among fishers by explaining the important relationship between parrotfish and coral reefs. They will also work with fisherfolk, fishmongers and restaurants to obtain their commitment to not capture or sell parrotfish.

FUNDEMAR, an environmental foundation in the Dominican Republic, has an ongoing campaign to end consumption of parrotfish. During the summer months, its members give educational talks to visitors as well as residents throughout the southeastern portion of the island.

FUNDEMAR educates resort staff and the dive industry about the important role parrotfish play in maintaining reef health. They also frequently promote lionfish as a sustainable alternative to parrotfish.



Above Photo: Promotional
Graphic by FUNDEMAR



Photo: Tim Calver

SALVEMOS EL PEZ LORO

Save the parrotfish



Photo: Tim Calver

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHTER

Parrotfish have a bright future thanks to the collaborative work of many environmental groups, governments and private companies. These groups have sparked interest in parrotfish and educated communities about their plight.

The Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program is committed to building partnerships that strengthen these outreach efforts and expand its work across the Caribbean region. For example, the Program is currently discussing a collaboration with the Institute for Socio-Ecological Research, whose on-the-ground surveys in the Dominican Republic are being used to determine the most effective methods of reaching fishers based on their means of communication and education level.

Partnerships such as these will help the Program's long-term efforts to educate communities about making the choice to pass on parrotfish.





CREDITS

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