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Immersive platform to explore global reef ecosystems launched today

Exploring reefs around the world is now possible without leaving home, with [Reef Life Explorer](#), an immersive interactive platform that tracks global reef health using data collected by citizen science scuba divers.

Launched today, this initiative of the [Reef Life Survey program](#) is an immersive platform that represents an unprecedented global collaboration spanning decades.

Reef Life Survey President and Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) marine ecologist Rick Stuart-Smith said the insights of this unique collaboration between professional and citizen scientists have now been brought to life through a first-of-its-kind interactive platform, developed in partnership with human futures design studio GLIDER.

"Hundreds of highly trained citizen scientist divers have surveyed thousands of reefs in a mammoth effort to monitor and track the state of our global reef ecosystems. Researchers at Reef Life Survey and IMAS at the University of Tasmania have processed and analysed millions of data points to distil and present these trends," Associate Professor Stuart-Smith said.

The new Reef Life Explorer makes the underwater world visible, bringing to life data from over 26,000 surveys across 4,000 sites in 54 countries and territories, representing almost 5,000 species and over 19 million individual animals.

On the surface, Reef Life Explorer provides an impressive overview of the trends in marine life, but diving deeper reveals the mounting pressure our reefs face from coastal development, overfishing, seafood consumption, recreation and human-induced climate change.

The impacts of these pressures have all too often been out of sight, below the surface. So by diving in and taking action, citizen scientist divers have collected the data that enables researchers to see and understand the shifting condition of our reefs – reefs that are intrinsically socially and economically valuable, supporting the wellbeing and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

"Since the project began, we've always seen the data we collect underwater as public property, with value far beyond the scientific community.

"We wanted to display the data in a way that would allow anyone with an internet connection and an interest in our oceans to see what's actually going on below the surface – and to explore the impacts and trends affecting the health of our reefs, through time," Assoc Prof Stuart-Smith said.

By highlighting the pressures our reefs face, and starting to track and monitor these changes, the platform enables more informed, collective decisions that will help manage and protect these vital ecosystems for future generations.

Founder & Director of [GLIDER](#), Lekki Maze said Reef Life Explorer provides an immersive experience in the underwater world, giving unparalleled visibility on the threats facing our reefs.

“By visualising and reflecting back the collective effort of thousands, this platform is a powerful reminder that each of us, whether a citizen scientist or a citizen of the world, can have an impact and help drive positive change,” Ms Maze said.

Associate Professor Stuart-Smith said Reef Life Explorer was an exceptional platform, and had exceeded his team’s expectations.

“Reef Life Explorer is a live, constantly-evolving resource that will continue to grow as the global monitoring effort expands – with more citizen scientist divers and collaborators contributing more data from more reefs around the world,” he said.

“We’re really excited to be sharing this important data with the world.”

The Reef Life Explorer, and the broader Reef Life Survey activities that underpin it, have been supported by The Ian Potter Foundation, The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (VIC), State Natural Resource Management Program (WA), The Minderoo Foundation, The Integrated Marine Observing System, and The Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies.

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Images are available to download [here](#)

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