



PROTECTION OF CORALLIIDAE IS LONG OVERDUE

COP15 PROPOSAL 21: FAMILY CORALLIIDAE PROPOSED FOR CITES APPENDIX II
PROPOSNENTS: SWEDEN (ON BEHALF OF THE 27 EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES)
AND THE UNITED STATES

Red and pink coral (Family Coralliidae, also known as *Corallium* or *Paracorallium*) are long-lived, slow-growing deep-sea corals that have been intensively harvested for centuries for use in jewelry and *objets d'art*. The rarity of these corals contributes to their coveted status. Coralliidae possess skeletons that, when highly polished and worked into a necklace, fetch prices of up to US\$25,000. Over 28 million pieces of Coralliidae were imported by the United States between 2001 and 2008.

Unregulated trade in *Corallium* and *Paracorallium* species is having a significant impact on populations in the Mediterranean and Pacific.

Historically, *C. rubrum* colonies of up to 50 centimeters in height were common in the Mediterranean. Today, more than 90 percent of colonies in fished areas in the Mediterranean are 3 to 5 centimeters tall and less than half are old enough to reproduce. In Spain, 89

percent of colonies in fished areas above 60 meters are below the legal size. In order to allow its population to continue to be productive indefinitely, the maximum sustainable yield for *C. rubrum* has been estimated at 98 years. The current practice is to take colonies from the ocean that are just 14 years old. Poaching is a serious concern in the Mediterranean.

In the western Pacific, Coralliidae populations have been depleted within four to five years of their discovery, resulting in a 'boom-and-bust' approach to fishing where populations are found and quickly depleted. Despite the high value and extensive market demand for Coralliidae products, landings in the Pacific in

the last 15 years have declined from 100-400 tonnes per year to less than five.

Seven Coralliidae species are traded worldwide. *C. rubrum* is found only in the Mediterranean, while the remaining six species are harvested in the Pacific. Of all the deep-sea coral species, the Coralliidae trade is the largest, estimated at 30 to 50 metric tons per year. By comparison, the global harvest of black coral (*Antipatharia*), another deep-sea coral species, is only five metric tons — yet these species have been listed under CITES Appendix II since 1981. All stony corals

(*Scleractinia*) also receive trade protection under CITES.

International trade protection for Coralliidae under CITES is needed to protect this resource and the industries and livelihoods that depend on them, and to ensure that this resource is sustainably managed.

Coralliidae meet the criteria for an Appendix II listing under Article II of the Convention which states that Appendix II shall include:

(a) all species which although not necessarily now threatened with extinction may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival; and

(b) other species which must be subject to regulation in order that trade in specimens of certain species referred to in sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph may be brought under effective control.



CORALLIIDAE REPORT CARD: LEFT BEHIND IN GLOBAL PROTECTION

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC REFERENCE	COMMERCIAL TRADE USE	RELATIVE TRADE VOLUME	CITES PROTECTION STATUS
Red & Pink Coral	<i>Coralliidae</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewelry Home décor 	High	None
Black Coral	<i>Antipatharia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewelry Home décor 	Moderate	CITES Appendix II (1981)
Stony Coral	<i>Scleractinia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home décor Tourist mementos Aquarium specimens 	Highest	CITES Appendix II (1985, 1989)
Blue Coral	<i>Heliopora coerulea</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewelry Aquarium specimens 	Low	CITES Appendix II (1985)
Fire Coral & Lace Coral	<i>Millepora & Stylaster</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquarium specimens 	Low	CITES Appendix II (1985, 1990)
Organ-pipe Coral	<i>Tubipora musica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquarium specimens Curios 	Low	CITES Appendix II (1985)
Gold Coral	<i>Gerardia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewelry 	Low	None
Bamboo Coral	<i>Isididae</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewelry Home décor 	Moderate	None

Top Photo: Patty Debenham, Marine Photobank; Center Photo: G. Marola, 2007.