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**Assisted Fertilization of Threatened Staghorn Coral to Complement the Restoration of Nurseries in Southeastern Dominican Republic**

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**Abstract**

*Acropora cervicornis* and *Acropora palmata* have declined dramatically in the Caribbean since the early 80's, and are classified as Critically Endangered Species. To promote their recovery, restoration programs focusing on introducing fragmented specimens have been intensified. The current study was conducted in the south-eastern part of the Dominican Republic in September 2015 and August 2016. During these two periods, gametes from six mature colonies were collected from a five-year-old nursery with an area of 150 m<sup>2</sup> at a depth of 12.5 m. 80% of the studied colonies spawned both years. Fertilization was assisted between 21:50 and 00:00 h, immediately after spawning. Fertilization and settlement rates were 90% and 50%, respectively. To our knowledge, this is the first scientific report on nursery propagated *A. cervicornis* spawning, assisted fertilization, larvae rearing and breeding.

**Keywords**

Threatened Staghorn Coral; Spawning; Sexual Coral Reproduction; Restoration; Nurseries

**1. Introduction**

Abundance of species of the genus *Acropora* has been declining sharply in the Caribbean since the 1980s and signs of recovery have not been significant (National Marine Fisheries

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