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The News Journal of the International Society for Reef Studies
Reef Currents: Sponges and Environment



***Chasing Coral*: A wonderfully told story and a new opportunity for conservation outreach**

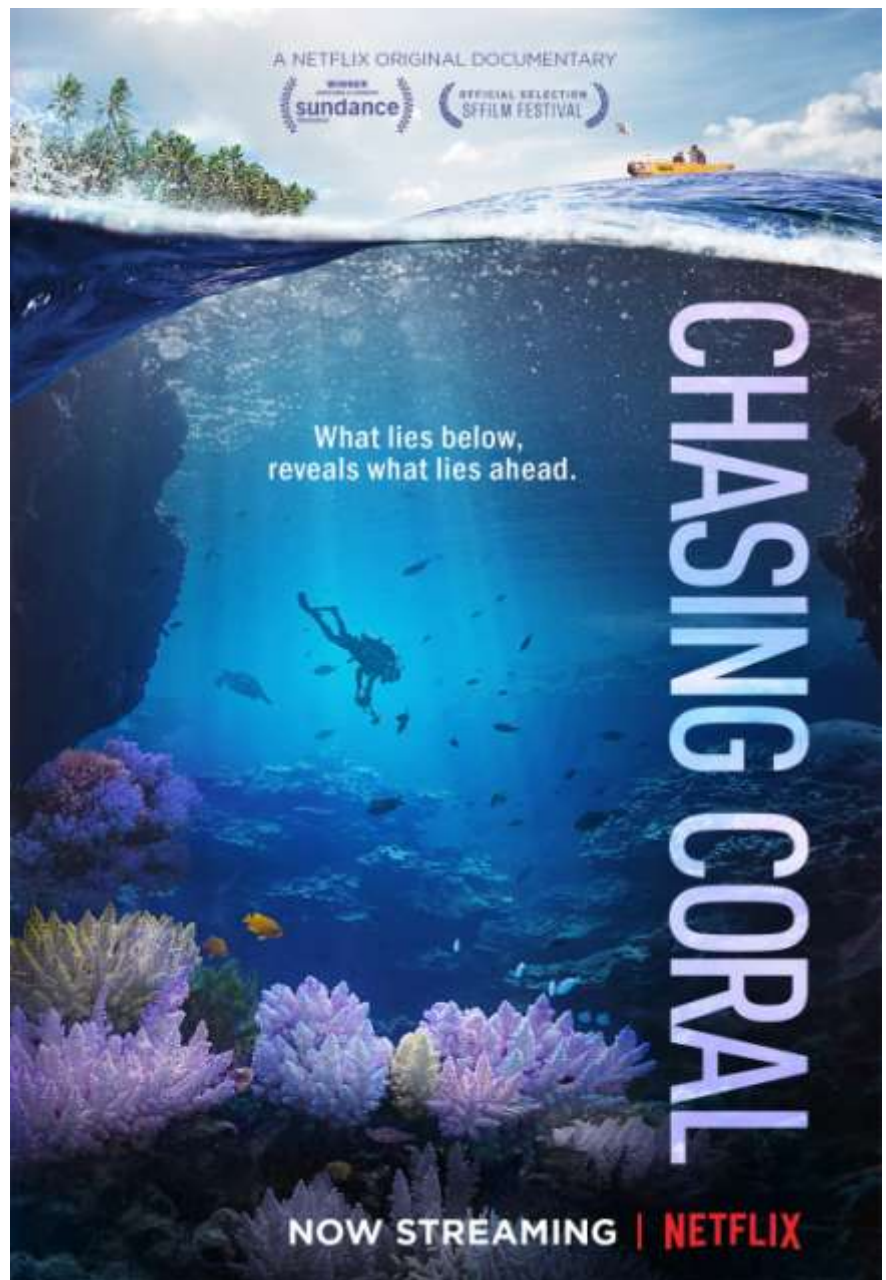
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[Chasing Coral](#), a new documentary film, begins following Richard Vevers, a former London advertising executive, whose passion for the ocean and expertise as an underwater photographer and communication specialist lead him to pursue a new goal – communicating the plight of the ocean and marine ecosystems to a broad audience. Coincidentally, Richard begins this adventure and his newly founded [XL Catlin Seaview Survey](#) just before the Third Global Coral Bleaching Event began to unfold (see article elsewhere in this issue). After documenting bleaching on a particularly hard hit reef, he saw the film *Chasing Ice* on a plane and a light bulb went off. The loss of corals was an unfortunately fitting undersea parallel to the loss of ice in Greenland. Working with the director of *Chasing Ice*, Jeff Orlowski, the filming of *Chasing Coral* began and the team began the pursuit to document coral bleaching as it happened around the world, using time-lapse videography. Along the way, Jeff met the film's surprise co-star, Zack Rago, a self-proclaimed coral nerd not long out of college and working for the Colorado company whose underwater video systems would soon play a major role in the film. The team planned to venture to reefs expected to soon bleach to capture the process first-hand. Easy, right?

As the two Chief Scientific Advisors Prof. Hoegh-Guldberg (Director of the [Global Change Institute](#), University of Queensland and Chief Scientist of the XL Catlin Seaview Survey) provided Exposure Labs (the production team for



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Chasing Coral) overall guidance on the increasing of impact climate change on coral reef ecosystems, and particularly the Great Barrier Reef; while Dr. Eakin (Coordinator of [Coral Reef Watch](#), US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) provided Exposure Labs and the XL Catlin Seaview Survey with the best guidance NOAA Coral Reef Watch's satellite and climate model-based products could offer on where and when the most severe coral bleaching would occur. Of course, the production team then had to factor in logistics, permits, equipment, and other constraints to decide where they could feasibly go. Unfortunately, problems with equipment, vagaries of weather, and other factors made this harder than the filmmakers first realized, but also a more exciting story to tell.

The film marries an exciting adventure with breathtaking imagery to bring the plight of coral reefs to life. It helps viewers fall in love with this astounding ecosystem we know well. It shows the threats climate change is posing to coral reefs without preaching or being heavy-handed. It shows the brutal loss of corals and reefs before the viewers' eyes and the impact it has on those of us who work with reefs daily. Finally, it uplifts the viewer with hope for the future. Be sure to stay through the credits – there is one part that, without fail, raises the delighted applause of audiences.

Many other top coral reef scientists appear throughout the film and were advisers to *Chasing Coral*, ensuring that the science is as accurate as possible. Many of you and your bleaching reports are in the film thanks to your responses to their [appeal for underwater imagery](#). The film also contains scenes from the special Coral Bleaching Town Hall from the 13th International Coral Reef Symposium in Honolulu, Hawaii in June 2016. *Chasing Coral* won the US Documentary Audience Award at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival in January. Since then it has garnered several other awards, especially audience choice awards, from film festivals around the world. The [official trailer](#) is available on YouTube, while the film itself had its Netflix premiere on 14 July 2017. It is easily found on Netflix using the search function and you can arrange to [host a screening](#) from their website.

SVII in action during Seaview Survey in the Coral Triangle (Photo credit – courtesy XL Catlin Seaview Survey / The Ocean Agency / Aaron Spence).



This film is an excellent outreach tool that you can use to use in your communities to show off the wonders of coral reefs, the threats they face, and the need for both conservation and action to address global warming. At a time when bleaching has become more frequent and severe, and global warming continues to threaten coral reefs and other ecosystems around the globe, *Chasing Coral* provides a way we can all take this message to audiences who don't yet understand the need for action.