PRESS RELEASE

CATLIN SEAVIEW SURVEY DIVES INTO ACTION TO REVEAL IMPACT OF CYCLONE ITA ON GREAT BARRIER REEF

Pre and post storm surveys can bring new understanding of how tropical cyclones damage coral reefs.

Sydney, 16 June 2014 – Using its specially developed underwater imaging techniques, the Catlin Seaview Survey, funded by international specialty insurer Catlin Group Limited, is revealing a snapshot of how the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Ita impacted exposed parts of the Great Barrier Reef.

The same section of reef before and after Tropical Cyclone Ita – Full image gallery available here

In the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Ita, the Catlin Seaview Survey sent a team of divers and scientists from the Global Change Institute at The University of Queensland to get an initial assessment of the storm's impact. Equipped with a new, highly portable model of the SVII survey camera kit, the team was able to deploy quickly to make an initial assessment and observations. This will be followed by a full scientific survey later in the year.

Ita was the second Category 5 storm in three years to hit the Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea off the North East Australian coast *(See Note).*

The team say that the Ribbon Reef region of the Great Barrier Reef suffered most as Cyclone Ita passed directly overhead. By contrast, there was less impact at Osprey Reef in the Coral Sea because the centre of the storm passed about 90 kilometres away.

The impact cyclones have on coral reefs is quite unpredictable and still relatively unknown. However the Catlin Seaview Survey team did work in the region in 2012 and has been able to revisit those areas to make comparisons between images. The most striking observation was the huge variance of storm impact and no uniform pattern of damage in the path of the storm.

On Osprey Reef it was evident that some areas are more robust, with some parts naturally protected from storms. Whilst the outer walls of the reef lying closer to the path of the cyclone were damaged, these corals are relatively hardy and can be expected to recover. Acting as a breakwater, the reefs themselves seem to have reduced the power of the storm's impact on their leeward side and, as a result, Cyclone Ita left those areas mostly intact.

There were more pockets of intense damage found in the shallower Ribbon Reefs on the Great Barrier Reef closer to the coastline.

"We found areas with extensive damage next to perfectly healthy reefs that appeared virtually unaffected by the storm" said Richard Vevers, the Catlin Seaview Survey's Project Director, who dived with the team. "There were differences not just between the sheltered and exposed parts of reefs, but also differing levels of damage to areas immediately adjacent to one another".

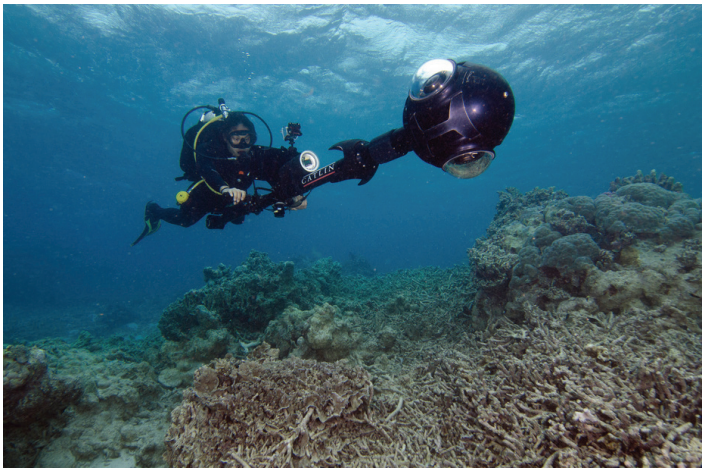
One of several possible explanations the team will want to investigate later this year is how the overall structures of the reefs may have channelled the force of the wave action hitting the reefs, creating the varied pattern of damage.

The Catlin Seaview Survey Chief Scientist and Global Change Institute Director, Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, said: "There is a myriad of increasing and cumulative impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. We can control impacts such as fishing, coastal development and marine debris. However, we do not have the same control over storms and cyclones.

"Ensuring that coral can bounce back from these disturbances is at the heart of the matter. The more we reduce other stressors on the reef (factors such as water quality), the better

the chance that coral can bounce back. Given the steep decline of coral on the reef, it's clear we have a lot of work to do".

Richard Vevers of the Catlin Seaview Survey said: "What's so significant about this work is that we now have the capability, for the first time, to deploy our cutting-edge survey technology quickly and to compare information over time.



The highly portable model of the Catlin Seaview Survey's SVII camera – The SVII-S

Mark Newman, Chief Executive of Catlin Group Limited's Asia-Pacific operations, said: "Extreme weather increases economic threats such as damage to property, compromising food security and the livelihoods of coastal populations. At the heart of the Catlin Seaview Survey work is a need to determine if tropical cyclones are causing long-term damage to coral reefs and reducing their effectiveness as protecting barriers for the coastline, its people and their businesses. Clearly there is a potential risk which we need to understand better."

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MEDIA PHOTOS:
Media photos of the underwater survey can be downloaded from:
http://catlinseaviewsurvey.zenfolio.com/gbr_ita_response
Please credit all images as listed in media gallery. (Free use with credit to Catlin Seaview Survey. No on-pass)

NOTES

CYCLONES

Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi hit the region in 2011. Severe Tropical Cyclone Ita struck in January 2014. Both were Category 5 tropical cyclones).

ABOUT THE CATLIN SEAVIEW SURVEY

The Catlin Seaview Survey is a major scientific expedition that is documenting the composition and health of coral reefs around the world. During 2012 the Survey investigated the Great Barrier Reef off Australia, while during 2013 it studied coral reefs near Bermuda and in the Caribbean. The 2014 Survey is focusing on South East Asia. The impartial scientific data gathered by the Catlin Seaview Survey is intended to strengthen the understanding of how changes beneath the oceans' surface may impact the rest of our planet.

The Catlin Seaview Survey recently launched The Catlin Global Reef Record - a first-of-its-kind global database and online standardized research tool relating to major reef ecosystems. Visit www.globalreefrecord.org

More information about the Catlin Seaview Survey can be found here:
http://www.catlinseaviewsurvey.com

Existing 360 images of the Catlin Seaview Survey expedition can be found here:
http://catlinseaviewsurvey.com/gallery/a576_panorama-image-gallery

You can also engage with the Catlin Seaview Survey and its 3.3 million followers on Google+ here: https://plus.google.com/+CatlinSeaviewSurvey/posts

ABOUT CATLIN

Catlin Group Limited is the sponsor of the Catlin Seaview Survey. Catlin is an international specialist property/casualty insurer and reinsurer that underwrites worldwide through six underwriting hubs. Catlin shares are traded on the London Stock Exchange (ticker symbol: CGL). More information about Catlin can be found at www.Catlin.com.