



Reef Check - Hawai'i

Date: Feb 1, 2026

Rapid Response: Crown of Thorns Potential Outbreak - Hōnaunau

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On January 26th, 2026 Reef Check Hawai'i received notification from the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) of a possible Crown of Thorns Seastar (COTS) outbreak at Hōnaunau. On February 1st, 2026 at approximately 8:31 am, Reef Check - Hawai'i divers Brad Giles and Adam Florea conducted a quick, roving survey of the approximate area outlined in red (fig. 1), noting approximate GPS coordinates of COTS aggregations (see green markers in fig. 1 and coordinates tab. 2).

The general substrate of survey area consisted of an estimated <15% hard coral coverage, rubble (<15cm diameter rocks), rock (primarily calcium carbonate >15cm and turf algae), and small patches of sand. Hard coral species observed during the survey were *Porites lobata*, *Porites lutea*, *Porites compressa*, *Pavona varians*, *Montipora patula*, and *Montipora capitata*. Nine (9) COTS were observed during the survey. Forty-nine (49) coral colonies with suspected COTS predation on at least part of the colony were observed. Species of coral observed with suspected COTS predation were *Pavona varians*, *Montipora patula*, *Porites lobata*, and *Montipora capitata* (see tab. 1). An estimate of less than 3% of coral colonies in the area were observed with signs of suspected COTS predation. COTS were observed at depths between 8.3 – 12 meters. COTS observed approximately measured between 25-30 cm in diameter with roughly 33% of COTS observed actively feeding.

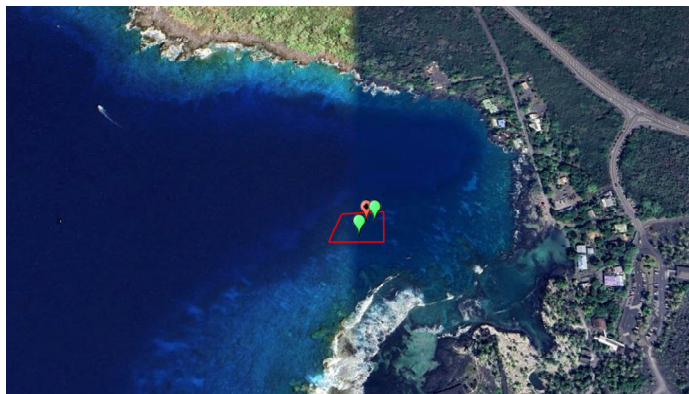


Fig. 1. Red Lines show approximate survey area. Green Pins notate approximate COTS aggregations. Red Pin notates initial reported sighting. Map: Google Earth

Species Observed	Code	Count
<i>Pavona varians</i>	PVAR	37
<i>Montipora patula</i>	MPAT	8
<i>Porites lobata</i>	PLOB	3
<i>Montipora capitata</i>	MCAP	1

Tab. 1. Coral colonies observed with suspected COTS predation.

Point	Latitude	Longitude
1	19° 25.373'N	155° 54.822'W
2	19° 25.385'N	155° 54.810'W

Tab. 2. Approximate coordinates of COTS aggregations.

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