



Disturbances due to Cyclone Gavin parallel those caused by a ship grounding

Winds exceeding 100 knots associated with Cyclone Gavin persisted on the Great Astrolabe Reef, Fiji for several days during March 1997. Sections of the northward-facing reef margins were sheared away and the newly exposed carbonate substrates were rapidly colonized (within 2–3 days) by the green alga *Trichosolen* sp. The upper over-view photograph shows a large disturbed area recently colonized by the *Trichosolen* bloom; the lower photograph shows individual *Trichosolen* clumps that have recruited on the broken tips of a single coral head. This event produced hundreds of these large monoculture-like patches (upper photo, to 30-m diam.) that were conspicuous because of their striking bright-green color.

Similar rapid colonization by *Trichosolen molassensis* Bucher & Norris occurred over a decade earlier, following the grounding of

the freighter *Wellwood* on Molasses Reef in the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, Florida (Littler et al. 1987). In both cases, *Trichosolen* did not appear to be susceptible to herbivores and persisted for at least several weeks (i.e., the extent of our observations). It is interesting that in both of these spatially and temporally widespread cases, *Trichosolen* was not collected previously from either reef despite extensive/intensive prior taxonomic work.

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References

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