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Notes and News

Cocos Island update: Poacher fined, forfeits ship In a decision handed down by the supreme court of Costa Rica, the owners of an Ecuadorian longliner, caught in August 2001 fishing illegally in the country's Cocos Island National Park ([MPA News 3:4](#)), have been fined US\$290,000 for the infraction and have had to forfeit the vessel to authorities. This marks the first time the country has applied vessel forfeiture as a penalty for poaching. The court also sentenced the captain of the vessel, the San Jose I, to a multi-year jail term. The vessel was apprehended last year by a patrol boat of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an international NGO that has provided free use of its boat to Cocos Island managers in enforcing park regulations. Still facing trial are two Colombian vessels caught fishing in the park in January 2002.

For more information: William Munoz Quiros, Friends of Cocos Island Foundation, Apartado 276-1005 Barrio Mexico, San Jose, Costa Rica. Tel: +506 256 7476; E-mail: wmunoz@csu.co.cr; Web: www.cocosisland.org/english.

MPAs needed for European corals, say researchers Citing evidence of trawling-related damage to deepwater corals in the Northeast Atlantic, European researchers have called for designation of conservation areas to protect remaining coral habitat. In a paper published in the 7 March 2002 issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B* a team of scientists from the UK, France, and Norway document coral bycatch from trawling along the West Ireland continental shelf-break area, and analyze video of trawled and untrawled reefs off Norway. Live coral caught in the trawls was measured with radiocarbon dating to be roughly 500 years old, while clumps of reef structure were 4000-5000 years old. "Our findings emphasize that conservation areas are urgently needed to protect coral reefs within the exclusive economic zone of EU waters," say the authors. In the past two years, Norway has closed two reefs to bottom trawling, while allowing fishing in the above water column to continue ([MPA News 3:5](#)).

For more information: Jason Hall-Spencer (lead author), Institute of Biomedical Sciences, Department of Environmental and Evolutionary Biology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, UK. E-mail: gbfa20@udcf.gla.ac.uk.

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