

Corals Survived Caribbean Climate Change

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Half of all coral species in the Caribbean went extinct between 1 and 2 million years ago, probably due to drastic environmental changes. Which ones survived? Scientists working at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) think one group of survivors, corals in the genus *Orbicella*, will continue to adapt to future climate changes because of their high genetic diversity.

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“Having a lot of genetic variants is like buying a lot of lottery tickets,” said Carlos Prada, lead author of the study and Earl S. Tupper Post-doctoral Fellow at STRI. “We discovered that even small numbers of individuals in three different species of the reef-building coral genus *Orbicella* have quite a bit of genetic variation, and therefore, are likely to adapt to big changes in their environment.”

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