THE STRAIT TIMES

from Ridge to Reef to Ridge of the Somosomo Strait

SERVITIUM MARE

VOL.1 | NO.2 THURSDAY OCTOBER 15 2026 PRICE: 4 MINUTES

WE ALL GOT COTS! WHAT DO I DO?

You don't need to scuba dive to help the Strait. Participation begins with drawing attention.

BY MARINE STEWARDSHIP DESK | REPORTING FROM NAGARA

While not on the formal agenda at the October AGM of the Taveuni Tourist Association, many members were curious about a recent PADI Aware event culling crown-of-thorns-starfish from sites on the Rainbow Reef. Many expressed concerns and direct experiences with the starfish on their front yard shoreline shallow reefs.

As members of Taveuni, the Strait and its reefs are core assets for their livelihood. *COTS* in the neighbourhood present them with a stark reality. Guests come for the water and colour. *COTS* can be a blight and danger of that experience.



Much better on a palm weave than on table coral

What should people do?

For some what to do will involve a mask, tank and vinegar syringe. For most, it will not.

The first answer for what to do is perhaps the most important. Don't simply go out and start yanking off crown-of-thorns.

SEE A CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH?

Wherever you are on the water - snorkeling, boating, swimming or diving - the steps below help all BUT you most of all.

- **Note its location:** Perhaps the best of all. Knowing where is good for others to find it and log it. If depth is knowable that is also useful.
- **Take a picture:** This helps with all manner of data. Size, exposure, how many around, water conditions.
- **Report it:** Pass on that information to likely knowledgeable staff. Dive masters, boat captains, front desk at a lodge. If they don't know they will know where to know.
- **Leave it:** While a dead *COTS* is a good *COTS* unless already out for a culling session with trained experienced people it doesn't pay for you to intervene. A disturbed *COTS* can undergo stress induced spawning releasing millions of eggs or sperm, defeating that one patient correct kill.

From Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. If you see <1 COTS over 40 minutes of looking that is a healthy situation.

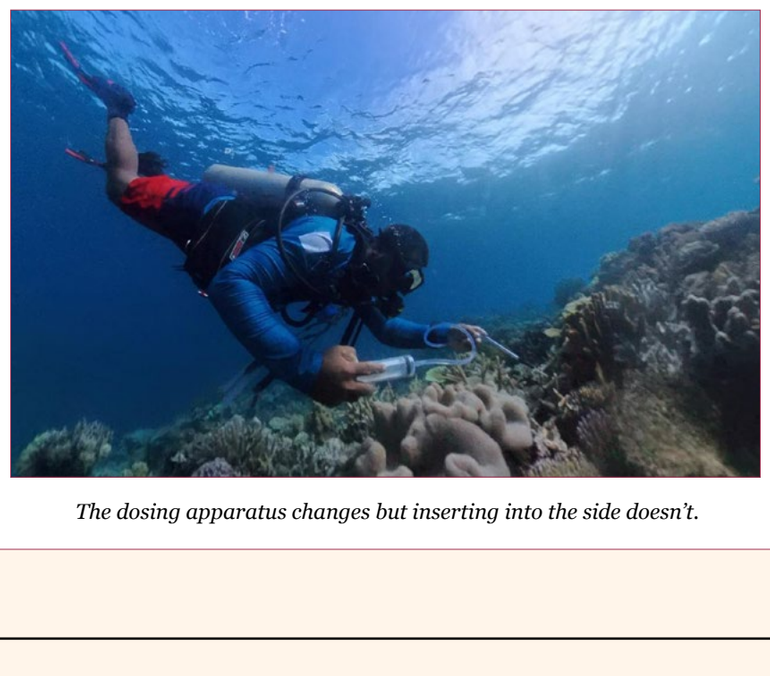
COTS are venomous animals, they live amongst fragile coral, and removing them badly can do more harm than good. But perhaps the more interesting answer is that most people can help without ever touching a *COTS*.

People who fish, snorkel, sail, paddle, operate boats or simply spend time looking at the Strait may be among the most useful people we have. *COTS* management begins with noticing.

Where are they being seen? How many? At what depth? Are there juveniles? Is there fresh coral damage nearby?

A photograph, approximate location and date can be far more useful than trying to intervene yourself. Boat crews can help transport trained teams. Resorts and dive operators can keep simple sighting records. Visitors can ask dive operators whether they are monitoring *COTS* and support those that do.

Crown-of-thorns naturally belong on coral reefs. The problem is not finding one. The problem is finding too many. That is why the next step for Rainbow Reef is bigger than another day of culling. It is learning to watch.



The dosing apparatus changes but inserting into the side doesn't.

You don't have to dive to protect a reef.

Sometimes you just have to be one more pair of eyes.

"We were invited to spot for COTS at Bat Island, while the dive masters operated the injections. Never having seen them, most disturbing was seeing them as furbies bunched hidden within the coral versus lounging on a table coral in full monty. We lost count of the kills. But not the sight of that grim scene!"

Kirby & Vanessa. Calgary Canada. Guests of Sau Bay Resort

THE STRAIT TIMES

Published in Fiji - Serving Vanua Levu, Taveuni, and the Waters of the Somosomo Strait

© 2026 THE STRAIT TIMES. SSVMI™. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED