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Higher Carbon Dioxide Levels Benefit Sea Stars

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Warmer water and elevated carbon dioxide levels help sea stars grow faster, reports a new study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The finding adds to a growing number of studies showing higher carbon dioxide levels are beneficial to marine life and do not cause harmful ocean acidification, as claimed by global warming alarmists.

The study by a team of scientists from the University of British Columbia found warmer water and higher carbon dioxide levels, both individually and collectively, help sea star growth rates.

Benefits Biosphere

"I have seen studies that show the CO2 in the Earth's atmosphere in past geological ages was much higher than now, to the Earth's flourishing," said bioethicist Thomas Derr, a professor at Smith College. "CO2 is the basic nutrient in plant growth and is good for the climate, not bad.

"Right now we are in a historically low point in terms of atmospheric CO2, and it would probably be good for us if it were higher—good for plants, good for people who have breathing problems, too. In short, CO2 is not the enemy but a good friend to life. Considering it a pollutant, subject to regulation, is simply absurd," Derr added.

Higher CO2 the Norm

Patrick Michaels, a research professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia and senior fellow at the Cato Institute, believes the new study should not come as a surprise to anyone. Michaels is disturbed about the many articles in the media unthinkingly claiming higher carbon

dioxide levels are bad.

"It is not surprising that there are adaptive responses to increases in carbon dioxide," Michaels said. "Remember, most of the organisms in this planet evolved during periods of higher carbon dioxide concentration than exist today.

"What is disturbing is that most of the scientific articles that are published today on this topic are articles that say the situation is worse than we thought. This is a well-known phenomenon, called publication bias, in economic, medical, and climate science literature," Michaels added.

Thomas Cheplick (**thomascheplick@yahoo.com**) writes from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

For more information ...

R. Gooding et al., "Elevated water temperature and carbon dioxide concentration increase the growth of a keystone echinoderm," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, June 9, 2009, vol. 106 no. 23 9316-9321: **http://www.pnas.org/content/106/23/9316.abstract**