

Battle for the reefs: Monitoring the development of biodiversity on four artificial oyster reefs

Van der Pool Jesse and Niek Visschedijk

Building with Nature, Delta Academy, HZ University of Applied Sciences, 5 Edisonweg, 4382 NW
Vlissingen, The Netherlands
E-mail: pool0001@hz.nl

Four artificial oyster reefs were placed at the Oesterdam sand nourishment in the Eastern Scheldt of the Netherlands in 2010 to reduce the erosion of the sand nourishment. The reefs consist of a metal cage filled with dead oyster shells and are intended to eventually turn into living oyster reefs and form a food source for birds. Through the construction of the artificial reefs, a heterogeneous, hard substrate was introduced onto the soft substrate which introduced a new habitat type which will likely support a different community composition. The biodiversity on the artificial reefs has been monitored for two years to investigate how the biodiversity is developing. What species have colonized the reefs? Do the reefs differ from each other, or from a natural reef in biodiversity? By placing the artificial reefs in an area with naturally soft substrate, have we created a haven for hard substrate exotic species to exist? Will the reefs turn into living and adapting reefs?

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