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Code Red! Tasmania's Red handfish in the spotlight at new IMAS exhibition

Research into the critically endangered Red handfish *Thymichthys politus* is being showcased at a new exhibition opening today at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) Gallery in Hobart.

The free exhibition shares the story of the Red handfish, the many challenges it faces, and the science of restoring wild handfish populations here in Tasmania.

"Red handfish are only found in Tasmanian waters and there are only around 100 adults left in the wild. These are only found at two small reefs in Frederick Henry Bay near Hobart," IMAS researcher Dr Jemina Stuart-Smith said.

"Red handfish live among the seaweed and seagrass of shallow reefs, but have been significantly impacted by various threats to their habitat, from climate change and native urchins overgrazing on seaweeds, to pollution, coastal development and direct human disturbance.

"They're also particularly susceptible to disturbance due to factors like vulnerable egg clutches, the limited dispersal of adults and juveniles, and small populations."

In the hope of saving Tasmania's Red, Spotted and Ziebell's handfish, the National Handfish Recovery Team (NHRT) established the joint IMAS and CSIRO [Handfish Conservation Project](#) in 2018.

"We're working hard to address the threats to Red handfish survival through wild handfish monitoring, habitat assessment, urchin removal, diver and community education, and a captive rearing and juvenile release program," Dr Stuart-Smith said.

"We've collected six egg clusters over the past three years, with around 200 handfish successfully hatched between IMAS, CSIRO and Seahorse World so far.

"In late 2020, we released 42 of these juvenile handfish to their two known habitats, and have since spotted a small number of these handfish – so we know this initiative is working."

Dr Stuart-Smith said plans are also underway to establish a Red handfish captive breeding program and a new captive housing facility at IMAS Taroona later this year.

Visit the exhibition at IMAS Gallery in Salamanca. All the details are [here](#).

IMAS would like to thank the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE Tas), CSIRO and all NHRT partners for their contribution to handfish research.

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