In the Remote Pacific, Glimpses of Pristine Corals

Stuart Sandin, *The New York Times*, November 12, 2010.

Last night, sitting on the deck of ship, I smelled fire. It was not fire that would cause captain of Hanse Explorer to sound fire alarm, but fire from island off starboard side. people of Tabuaeran — which is also known as Fanning Island — were stoking flames to cook fish that they had caught from surrounding coral reefs earlier in day. This was first time I had smelled smoke during this expedition.

team is in midst of month-long research cruise in archipelago in central Pacific called Line Islands. We are here to study ecology of coral reefs, taking a holistic perspective of each of the major biological players on the reef—the fish, corals, algae, and even the bacteria and viruses—and estimating how fast each of these groups grows.