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Two more working groups focussed on the ecology of the Red Sea. The first of these groups, consisting of scientists from Kiel and Jeddah, used the POSEIDON to examine the biological diversity of plankton. "Such data are of great importance for the management of fishery and environmental matters", biologist Dr. Benjamin Kürten explains, "since plankton is the basic food resource for all higher organisms in the Sea. We generally know that there are fewer nutrients in the north of the Red Sea than in the south. Yet, the effects, for example, on food chains are mostly unknown. We wish to fill this gap in knowledge."

The second German/ Saudi Arabian biology group did land-based work on the coral reefs off the Saudi Arabian coast. After a four week expedition between desert tracks and coral reefs, Prof. Martin Wahl from IFM-GEOMAR sums up: "Some reefs were found in a very natural and healthy condition, others were clearly damaged by human impact or natural causes." Prof. Wahl and his colleagues did fundamental work here: "No inventory of the coral reefs in the eastern Red Sea has been done so far", he says, "yet such basic data is important in order to recognize and possibly minimize threats to ecological systems." In the next two years, this pilot study will be followed by four in-depth surveys on how the reefs react to anthropogenic and natural stress factors.

According to project manager Dr. Warner Brückmann, the first four expeditions within the Jeddah Transect Project have come to an overall positive result: "In the beginning, there were some