

Video: Why do some fish thrive in oil-polluted water?

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When scientists from McGill University learned that some fish were proliferating in rivers and ponds polluted by oil extraction in Southern Trinidad, it caught their attention. They thought they had found a rare example of a species able to adapt to crude oil pollution.

At a time when humans are imposing an unprecedented burden on the world's ecosystems, studying how organisms can tolerate pollutants is crucial to understanding the impact of human activities – and to helping to mitigate it in the future.

Led by Dr. Gregor Rolshausen, then a postdoctoral researcher at McGill

working with Prof. Andrew Hendry, the team went to study the [guppy fish](#) living in polluted areas, comparing their morphology and [genetic makeup](#) to those of similar guppies from non-polluted parts of Trinidad.

But the key to the guppies' survival in oil-polluted waters was not what the researchers had expected. Prof. Hendry explains:

More information: Gregor Rolshausen et al. Do stressful conditions make adaptation difficult? Guppies in the oil-polluted environments of southern Trinidad, *Evolutionary Applications* (2015). [DOI: 10.1111/eva.12289](#)

Provided by McGill University

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