



Issue 1 - Volume 1 - Summer 2001 .

### Reef Check Teams in Action

- > - Indonesia: Coral Reefs hit the pop charts!
- > - Reef Check Hawaii
  - Return of Reef Check Israel.
- > - BVI, Association of Reef Keepers

### Spotlight on Reef Check Site

- > - Cocos (Keeling), Australia.

### Training Workshops/Meetings

- > - Training Workshop in Guangxi.
- > - Regional Training Center in Phuket hosts first International Training of Trainers Workshop.
- > - Reef Check and CANARI hold workshop in the Eastern Caribbean.

### Methods Check

- > - Why the wait for the fish?

### Other News

- >> - Reef Check gets Non-Profit Tax Status in US.
- >> - MAC monitoring protocols.
- >> - Reef Check part of Coral Reef Adventure.

## Reef Check Teams in Action

### **Indonesia: Coral Reefs hit the pop charts.**

A national training workshop in Bali (July 23-27) included training volunteers from throughout SE Asia. Volunteers from several islands throughout the archipelago, including Sumatra, Bali, Java, and Sulawesi, attended the workshop to build capacity for coral reef conservation and strengthen the relationship between Reef Check Indonesia and WWF's Wallacea program. Funded by a grant from an anonymous donor and the East-Asia Pacific Environment Initiative, attendees included 3 dive instructors from Lumba-Lumba divers, a dive operation on Pulau Weh (an island off the north coast of Aceh in Western



Drawing by Angelina K Winna, from St

Indonesia).

A frequently repeated question is: How to raise awareness among young people about the coral reef crisis? An innovative solution was found in Indonesia. Nugie, a popular Indonesian singer, is topping the pop charts with his new song, 'Hingga ke Terumbu Karang' (Up To the Reef). Working with Friends of the Reef and Reef Check Indonesia, Nugie wrote his song to promote coral reef conservation and relate the impacts of poorly planned development on land to the impacts on downstream coral reefs. Featured on MTV Asia, the song has raised awareness and knowledge among the younger generation. In another recent educational program, Reef Check and Friends of the Reef, an NGO dedicated to coral reef conservation, held a drawing competition among elementary school children in Bali. The children were taught about coral reef ecology and conservation and asked to draw pictures of themselves as fish. We received hundreds of beautiful drawings from talented children and have included one winning entry here -- "If I were a Fish" by Angelina K. Winna, St. Yoseph's elementary school.

### Reef Check Oahu

Funded by a grant from NOAA and the State of Hawaii Coastal Zone Management Program, Reef Check Hawaii has expanded to include all the major Hawaiian Islands. Activities on Oahu include bi-monthly surveys of reefs around the island. Recent trainees at the Waikiki Aquarium were lucky enough to observe a major coral spawning event in one of the tanks.



Dave Raney, RC Hawaii coordinator explains to volunteers how to record data during a substrate transect. Photo by J. Liebeler

### Return of Reef Check Israel

Israel: After a two-year hiatus, Reef Check Israel is back in action! The team is led by Yael Rogel, a marine biologist studying at the Interuniversity Institute for Marine Sciences of Eilat. Yael's team surveyed sites near the Princess Hotel Beach and in the Coral Reserve of Eilat, sites first checked by RC scientists in 1997. Her group also worked with "Friends of the Earth" to coordinate activities in the Coral Reserve of Eilat (part of the Marine Peace Park and a joint venture between Israel and Jordan). We look forward to continued collaboration with the Marine Peace Park and RC Israel.

### British Virgin Islands: Association of Reef Keepers

The Association of Reef Keepers (ARK) is once again carrying out Reef Check surveys. Four permanent sites are surveyed each year by Reef Check teams, including sites on Pelican Island, Norman Island, and Great Camanoe. ARK is partially supported by the National Parks Trust and Conservation and Fisheries. Trish Bailey, who has arranged sponsorship from several local dive companies and boat owners in BVI, coordinates activities. Special thanks to this team for their hard work getting sponsors!

## Spotlight on Reef Check Site

### Cocos (Keeling), Australia.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands is a remote coral atoll made up of 27 islands surrounding a central turquoise colored lagoon. These reefs are some of the most remote in the world, situated in the Indian Ocean 2,950 km northwest of Perth, Australia and 900 km southwest of Christmas Island.

The 27 islands are formed on two small, isolated mid oceanic atolls. One solitary island 24 km to the north of the



main atoll is North Keeling, now known as Pulu Keeling National Park. Only two of the 27 islands are inhabited by a population of 600 Cocos Malay and 100 government servants from Australia. The 26 islands that make up the southern atoll cover a total landmass 14 km<sup>2</sup>. The islands have been a focus of coral atoll research since the days when Charles Darwin visited the atoll in April 1836. On his voyage home after a three-year journey aboard the *HMS Beagle*, Darwin stayed on Cocos for ten days and recorded evidence to support his theory of coral atoll formation.

Robert (Greenie) Thorn has been volunteering his time as Reef Check coordinator in Cocos since 1997. Greenie is a horticulturalist and conservationist who works for Parks Australia. He and Wendy Murray, RC volunteer, annually organize and participate in Clean Up Australia Day activities on land and underwater around Cocos and assist the Cocos school with environmental activities such as surveying fish nursery areas, endangered species discussions and environmental activities. Additional Reef Check activities in Cocos include working with various clubs, private businesses and other government and non-government agencies to install mooring buoys around the islands for commercial dive operations. The moorings program has installed 23 public moorings at 9 locations around Cocos. Greenie and Wendy plan to install 11 permanent monitoring sites this year which will bring the total Reef Check sites to 16. For more information about Reef Check in Cocos, contact Greenie at [Robert.Thorn@ea.gov.au](mailto:Robert.Thorn@ea.gov.au). Thanks Greenie, Wendy, and everyone on the Cocos RC team!

## Trainings and Workshops

### Guangxi Autonomous Region, China Provincial Training

Guanxi, the southernmost mainland region of the People's Republic of China, is an important reef area with coastal fringing and offshore reefs. A US NOAA/NOS International-sponsored RC training workshop was held in Guangxi, China, June 22-30. Thunderstorms and bad weather prevailed, but Reef Check Hong Kong coordinator and trainer Keith Kei was able to train nine local government officials, including representatives from the Guangxi Oceanic Administration and the Institute of Oceanography, as well as four volunteers from local dive shops. Thanks Keith!



Reef Check Program Manager presents award to Thai RC coordinator Pinya Sarasas for her dedication to RC and hard work in setting up the Regional Training Center. Photo by H. Schuttenberg

### RC Training Center in Phuket hosts first SE Asian Regional Training of Trainers

The Reef Check Regional Training Center at the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) hosted its first international training from June 25-30th. Participants included representatives from Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Vietnam and Thailand. Dive shop operators from Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia also attended, along with volunteers from England, Canada, and the USA. PMBC senior scientist, Dr. Hansa Chansang, Thai RC coordinator Pinya Sarasas, and RC Thailand scientist Niphon Phongsuwan, received awards from RC Program Manager Jennifer Liebeler for their dedication and work in setting up the regional training center. Special thanks to the Thai Department of Fisheries for donating the *R/V Chakrathong Thongya* for use

during the workshop. Workshop participants spent three days aboard the research vessel, conducting training and Reef Check surveys on the reefs in Thon Sai Bay, Phi-



Phi Island, in the Gulf of Thailand. All participants are now certified as Reef Check trainers and will be expanding Reef Check monitoring, education, and management programs in their respective countries. The workshop was funded by a grant from the USAID/US State Department East Asia Pacific Environment Program. The next regional training will be held in December 2001, contact RC headquarters or Pinya Sarasas, Pinya@visto.com for more information or to sponsor a participant.

### UNEP GCRMN/RC Regional Training Workshop: Eastern Caribbean

Allan Smith, of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), in collaboration with Kai Wulf of the Soufriere Marine Management Authority (SMMA) and Reef Check Director Gregor Hodgson, conducted a training of trainers workshop for GCRMN/Reef Check in Soufriere, St. Lucia from July 11-13<sup>th</sup>. The Workshop, funded by the Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit of the United Nations Environment Program promoted the establishment of sustainable coral reef education, monitoring and management programs in eight nations: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago. For most countries, participants were pairs – one dive operator and one government officer. UNEP is building on its success in other parts of the world promoting the use of the Reef Check community-level monitoring program as an entry point for nations trying to monitor and manage their coastal resources. Participants interviewed after the training commented that Reef Check is particularly well-suited for use in the Caribbean due to its low cost, rapid training, low taxonomic requirements and the high information content of the results. All participants signed on as new RC coordinators and developed implementation plans for 2001-2 (contact us for a list or see our website). It was particularly helpful for participants to observe how the well-run SMMA is using Reef Check to evaluate management successes. SMMA is an excellent model for the Caribbean. [More info.](#)



Enthusiastic representatives from Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Carriacou, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Vincent, and St. Lucia took part in the E. Caribbean Training.

## Methods Check



Reef Check volunteer swimming slowly for 5 meters, counting fish. Photo courtesy of the Quiksilver Crossing

### Why the wait for the fish?

In each issue of The Transect Line, we will be highlighting a part of the Reef Check's methodology to try and answer some of our volunteer's frequently asked questions. People often ask, "Why wait for the fish?"

Fish are disturbed by divers, especially divers using scuba. Many retreat into holes and crevices in the reef and others may swim away. Reef Check methods specify that divers or snorkelers conducting the fish transect are to wait 15 minutes after the transect line has been laid down before

starting the survey in order to let the fish return to the disturbed area and come out of hiding. Once the 15-minute waiting period has passed and the count has begun, the divers must also stop every 5 meters, wait for 1-3 minutes, then swim slowly for 5 meters- counting fish only while they are swimming. The intention of the waiting period is to allow timid fish, to swim out and be counted. Care should be taken not to double-count fish that swim through the belt-transect more than once. By using this standard method of counting all over the world, results can be compared between regions.

## Other News

### **Reef Check gets Non-Profit Tax Status in US.**

The Reef Check Foundation, a registered charity in Hong Kong since 1997, is now a fully registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in the US. Program Manager Jennifer Liebeler, who comes from a family of attorneys, piloted the legal terrain to achieve this important goal. This status allows RC to accept tax deductible contributions in the US – a major step in building up the organization. In addition, a board of Directors has been appointed and a scientific and technical advisory committee is being expanded and formalized. We welcome Scott Campbell, Irmelin DiCaprio and Eric Cohen to the Board.

A gift of \$100 allows you to sponsor a Reef Check team of your choice. For more information on team locations, please visit our website at <http://www.reefcheck.org/teams.htm>. You can also donate any amount directly over the internet by clicking on the button at right. Reef Check also accepts tax-deductible donations of scuba gear, underwater photo/video gear, airplane tickets/frequent flyer miles, and lodging and boat time for survey teams. For additional information on how you can help Reef Check, please contact our Development Director, Jarrett Smith at 1-310-794-4985.

### **Upcoming MAC meeting in August**

Reef Check continues to work with the [Marine Aquarium Council](#) (MAC) to conserve coral reefs and other marine habitats. Reef Check director Gregor Hodgson met with representatives from industry, government agencies and non-government organizations from most coral exporting countries in Jakarta at the International Workshop on the Trade in Coral and Live Rock. Based on input from all parties, Reef Check has drafted a set of scientifically rigorous assessment protocols for use by independent groups to monitor the effects of the certified marine aquarium trade operations on the health of the coral reef and the populations of harvested species and live rock. The MAC Science and Monitoring Advisory Committee will be meeting with Reef Check representatives in Honolulu in August to complete the final monitoring protocols.

### **Successful filming of RC for Coral Reef Adventure**

On May 2nd, a huge IMAX camera captured renowned underwater cinematographers and authors Howard and Michele Hall, training a group of Tahitians in Reef Check methods under the picturesque mountains of Moorea. The IMAX film "[The Coral Reef Adventure](#)" produced by MacGillivray Freeman Films, is a celebration of the beauty and majesty of tropical coral reefs. We would like to thank the film crew, Howard and Michele Hall and Greg MacGillivray for inviting RC to participate in the film, and the crew of the Undersea Hunter for their hospitality. Special thanks to UCLA graduate student Craig Shuman for training Howard and Michele and coordinating the Reef Check activities. Look for Coral Reef Adventure in large format theaters in February 2003.

The global coral reef education, monitoring and management program.  
>> [Make a Donation](#) <<

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