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Reef Check Teams in Action

BRAZIL

As part of its seven-year circumnavigation, Quiksilver's Crossing joined RC Brazil in March to explore the Brazilian coast for big waves and pristine reef. RC Brazil took this unique opportunity to survey the only atoll in the South Atlantic and the only fully protected reef area in Brazil. The team had not had an opportunity to survey the area until this time because of the distant location, difficult work conditions and small budget. But with the Crossing's help, RC Brazil coordinator, Beatrice Padovani Ferreira, along with three reef scientists (Mauro Maida from University of Pernambuco and Clovis Castro and Debora Pires from Rio de Janeiro National Museum) were able to survey the area and collect information that will greatly help in their management efforts.



Tamara Mello is joined by a school of damselfish as she follows the transect along a beautiful Brazilian reef. Photo courtesy of RC Brazil.

The expedition also enabled some eager surfers to get trained up in RC and help the scientists out. Students from the local primary school visited the boat and wrote essays on the Crossing. The students with the best essay won an original Tony Carrol's surfboard. The Crossing welcomed members of the government including Chief of the Fernando de Noronha Marine Park, Claudio Bellini, and the Chief of the Atol das Rocas Marine Park, Maurizelia Brito. From the Ministry of Environment, Daniela America, represented the Secretary of Biodiversity, that in Brazil is responsible for fulfilling commitments to the Convention of the Biodiversity. For more information, contact Beatrice at beatrice.ferreira@ibama.gov.br.

FRENCH POLYNESIA



RC volunteers take part in land-based training to become comfortable with RC methods. Photo courtesy of RC French Polynesia.

Coordinated by a network of committed scientists, RC French Polynesia operates out of the auspices and support of CRIOBE-EPHE <http://www.univ-perp.fr/ephe/criobe.html> and IFRECOR (French Coral Reef Initiative) <http://www.environnement.gouv.fr/ifrecor/default.htm>.

Since 2001, RC French Polynesia has conducted surveys in Bora Bora, Moorea and Huahine with the number of sites increasing each subsequent year. In 2002, four trainings were held in Moorea and Bora Bora, bringing local students, dive clubs and members of the community together to become RC certified. Three trainings are scheduled in 2003 which

will expand to include certifying the Pearl Resorts (<http://www.pearlresorts.com>) dive club. RC French Polynesia will be publishing their results in July 2003. For more information, contact Yannick at criobe@mail.pf.

EAST AUSTRALIA

Reef Check Australia is getting bigger and better. Initiated by *Undersea Explorer* as an entirely volunteer-based effort in 1997, this program is now supported by the Commonwealth government and the Queensland dive industry. Since March 2003 a team consisting of international dive instructors, marine science students and local divers embarked on a Reef Check extravaganza. They started with a training week on board *Undersea Explorer*, which is based in Port Douglas, and have traveled to dive destinations on the Great Barrier Reef all the way down the coast to the Whitsunday Islands. All the reef trips have been provided in-kind by various dive operators. So far, the team has surveyed 32 dive sites and they're still going! Reef Check Coordinator Jos Hill wants to extend a big thanks for the huge amount of support this project has received. Check out their new site (still under construction) at <http://www.ReefCheckOz.eyesfull.com>. For more information, contact Jos at jos.hill1@jcu.edu.au.

Spotlight on Reef Check Site- Cambodia

By Elsie Wong Lih Shiu (KK3 Expedition leader) and Loh Tse-lynn (KK3 Scientific Officer)

Cambodia is located in Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand between Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos. Due to high coastal turbidity, Cambodia's reefs are few and in high demand in world markets as they are reportedly one of Cambodia's main exports to neighboring Thailand. With the support of the Singapore International Foundation's Youth Expedition Project (SIF YEP), http://www.sif.org.sg/ca/YEP_factsheet.doc, RC Cambodia was established to help sustain Cambodia's fragile reefs. RC Cambodia is based at the National University of Singapore (NUS), <http://www.nus.edu.sg/>, and led by Elsie Wong Lih Shiu. The team is made up of volunteers from all walks of life, including students, businesspeople, members of the local community, military personnel from the air force and marine police, all of whom are dedicated to conserving Cambodia's natural resources.



A three-staged marine conservation project in 2001 was developed to establish a marine park in the region to promote local ecotourism. The project would also train Fisheries Department Officers and provide public education for the community. The project was funded by the



Above-water view at one of 17 sites RC Cambodia surveyed for Koh Kong III Expedition. Photo by Ferris Tan.

Singapore International Foundation (SIF), <http://www.sif.org.sg/>, under the Youth Expedition Project (YEP), <http://www.sif.org.sg/yep/abtyep.html>. In 2003, RC Cambodia participated in the third and final phase of the project, Koh Kong III (KK3). This phase aimed to collect coral reef data from the Koh Sdach islands of Koh Kong province along Cambodia's western coast. The objective of the expedition was to complete the assessment of the marine biodiversity of the reefs in the Koh Kong Province around the Koh Sdach group of islands, which had never been comprehensively surveyed before. The Tropical Marine Science Institute (TMSI) and the Department of Biological Sciences (DBS), <http://www.dbs.nus.edu.sg/>, at NUS also participated

in the expedition and all data collected were analyzed and archived by the Marine Biology Laboratory of DBS. This information will be presented to the Cambodian government on the possibilities of having Koh Kong islands as a marine managed area.

The reefs surveyed of the outer islands of the Koh Sdach group all showed signs of anthropogenic impact, particularly from fishing activities. Nonetheless, fish life of the outer islands was found to be quite healthy, with parrotfish and popular target food fish such as groupers and snappers still present at many sites. *Diadema setosum* was the most common invertebrate while other invertebrate indicators were usually not spotted except for giant clams in a few sites. While there was no obvious industry for invertebrate tourist curio products, some of the edible target invertebrates such as sea cucumbers could have been harvested by the local fishermen.



A RC volunteer takes a closer look for hiding invertebrates. Photo by Cheng Wee Hong.

Similarly to the sites surveyed during the first and second expeditions (KK1 and KK2) in 2001-2002, the fringing reefs are too shallow and lacking in megafaunal diversity to be major diving attractions. The Koh Sdach group of islands is situated on a shallow landmass of 20m depth that extends to almost 20km from the mainland. The presence of patch reefs or reefs beyond the island shelf is currently still unknown. However, the high percentage cover of live hard corals, the presence of attractive invertebrates such as cowries and nudibranchs, and the large schools of fish in some areas make diving a viable option for tourists in addition to other activities.

This expedition would not have been possible without the active participation and support of His Excellency Dr Touch Seang Tana, Undersecretary of State, Member of Economic, Social, Culture Observation Unit (OBSES); the Department of Fisheries; and the Koh Kong Provincial Governor's Office of Cambodia. The project received additional funding from PADI Project Aware Foundation, Asia Pacific and the Singapore Lee Foundation. For more information about this project or any other RC Cambodia activities, please contact Elsie at cewong@singnet.com.sg.

Trainings, Workshops, and Meetings

ITMEMS FOLLOW-UP

The 2nd International Tropical Marine Ecosystem Management Symposium (ITMEMS-2) was held in Manila this past March. It provided a great forum for scientists and managers to discuss coral reef conservation. RC Australia coordinator Jos Hill gave a presentation on using Reef Check as a monitoring program on the Great Barrier Reef. She has provided a copy of her presentation, written as a case study, called "Implementing Reef Check as a Long-Term Monitoring Program on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia." For more information contact Jos at jos.hill1@jcu.edu.au.

COASTAL AND MARINE MANAGEMENT MEETING

In March, the Regional Seminary on Coastal and Marine Management was held in Central Java, Indonesia. Results of RC monitoring the Karimunjawa Islands (1997-2002) were presented by RC's Central Java Coordinator, Wisnu Widjatmoko. RC was represented by the Marine Diving Club (MDC), based out of Diponegoro University, which is the RC team responsible for

monitoring Karimunjawa Islands. The seminar brought over 150 participants including scientists, reef managers, local government, fisheries groups, other non-profit organizations and members from local community. At this meeting, an agreement between Karimunjawa Islands' stakeholders was made, addressing management and exploitation. It also addressed how to sustain natural resources, especially of the coral reef ecosystem through the increased integrated management of all stakeholders. For more information about this seminar and other activities of RC Central Java, contact the MDC at mdc_kelautan@hotmail.com.

RC EGYPT & EUROPE EXPEDITIONS

Reef Check in Marsa Alam

Join RC Europe and Blue Heaven Holidays and survey Marsa Alam, September 15th - 28th.

Dahab & Sharm el Sheikh

Join RC Europe and RC Egypt and survey in the Sinai, September 30 - October 6.

REEF AWARENESS WEEK

July 27 - August 2, 2003

Celebrate the tenth anniversary of Reef Relief's Coral Photo-monitoring Survey in the Florida Keys. The week will be filled with activities including the gala Jewel of the Sea Reef Ball on Saturday, August 2nd. For more information go to <http://www.reefrelief.org>.

Reef Check Champion

This month we are highlighting Georg Heiss, coordinator for RC Europe. If you know a Reef Check Champion that you would like to be nominated, please email a brief description of their contribution as well as a photo (if possible) to Kelly at rcheck2@ucla.edu.

Georg Heiss has been an invaluable member of the RC team since our beginnings in 1997. Georg started out as a team scientist and team leader for RC in Egypt. He has conducted surveys in the Red Sea since 1997. In 1998, he became the coordinator of RC Europe, as well as chairman of RC in Germany. He is currently active in project development and training in coral reef monitoring and management for RC.

Georg's past activities have included co-ordination of international research programs, such as the Indonesian-German program for cooperation in Marine Sciences and Geosciences at the Center for Marine Tropical Ecology in Bremen, Germany. He has also worked on the analysis of international climate policy at the Advisory Council on Global Change to the German Government.



RC Europe Coordinator Georg Heiss (right) congratulates a volunteer upon completion of a RC training. Photo by Constanze Conrad.

In addition to his work with RC, Georg is a carbonate geologist specializing in coral reef sedimentology with a strong integrative and inter-disciplinary approach. He has conducted paleo-climatologic studies using corals in the recent past and the Holocene, as well as research programs in coral reef growth and the present human impacts on coral reefs of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Georg has a strong interest in raising public awareness for environmental issues related to the marine environment and climate change.

Last month, Georg conducted the first training in East Africa which included 26 participants from Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, and brought MPA officers, managers, National Park rangers, and boat operators together to be trained in RC methods. Look for information about this training in next quarter's newsletter.

RC would like to thank Georg for his continued dedication RC and his commitment to the conservation of coral reefs.

Methods Check

WEB REEF ADVISORY SYSTEM (WRAS)

Reef Check is proud to announce that we are in the final stages of the development of the WRAS project. This project will create a web-based system that will enable teams to submit their Reef Check survey data directly to our global database as well as perform summary statistics and comparisons among reefs within the database. In addition, teams will be able to receive management recommendations based on their Reef Check survey results. Teaming up with a group from the Coastal Resource Center at the University of Rhode Island, we are in the process of creating a series of management responses to help teams protect their coastal resources. A team of experts from around the world will be attending a workshop at UCLA in early June to finalize the development of the system. Keep an eye out for updates on this exciting project.

Other Reef Check News

REEF RESCUE 2003

On June 25th, RC held its first annual fundraiser, Reef Rescue 2003, at Universal CityWalk, California. The event, chaired by actor and RC Honorary Chairman Leonardo DiCaprio and veteran film producer and RC board advisor Gale Anne Hurd, brought members of the Southern Californian community together in celebration of coral reefs. RC and partners, including the Institute of the Environment, Quiksilver and MacGillivray Freeman Films, brought guests the splendor of coral reefs on the BIG screen. The event featured an advanced screening of the new IMAX® Theater film *Coral Reef Adventure* and a VIP party at Café Tu Tu Tango with special musical guests Deborah Falconer and Suzy Chesler. The event was a fabulous success raising \$100,000. For articles and photos of the event, visit

www.reefcheck.org/reef_rescue_2003/index_success.htm.

EARTH DAY AT UCLA



RC volunteers Jenny, Krista and Andrea (left to right) welcome Sen. John Edwards to UCLA Earth Day. Photo by Reef Check.

On April 22nd, RC celebrated the Second Annual Earth Day Celebration on the UCLA campus. The event was co-sponsored by the Institute of the Environment and the California Public Interest Research Group (CalPIRG). Hundreds of UCLA students, faculty and administrators joined in on the festivities. The day's events were topped off with a visit from Senator John Edwards (D-NC), one of the top Democratic hopefuls for the upcoming 2004 presidential election. All in all, Earth Day 2003 was a great success, and we look forward to Earth Day 2004! A big thank you goes out to all those who participated!

UPDATE ON MYANMAR (BURMA) TRIP

In February, five divers joined RC Europe coordinator Georg Heiss on the Myanmar Reef Check/Europe Conservation Switzerland expedition. Surveys were conducted on the Mergui archipelago reefs of the Andaman Sea. Reef Check indicator species were, for the most part, hard to come by, but 1000 *Diadema* were recorded at a Reef Check site in the channel between Poni Island and Pulau Bada Island! Scott Linge, a volunteer on the expedition, has posted his personal report of the trip, including photos. Visit <http://www.scubadiving.com/members/tripreports.php?s=1996>.

RC CUBA TRAINING

The first national level Reef Check training for Cuba was held from from July 8th to 11th at the Guanabo Marine Park, east of Havana. Over 28 marine park rangers and government staff were trained in scuba and RC monitoring. The enthusiasm of the Cuban participants was demonstrated by their willingness to swim long distances to the reef and to live in tents during the training. The Cuba reefs include some of the best remaining examples of *Acropora palmata* in the Caribbean. A new network of almost 60 MPAs in Cuba will go far to protect these invaluable reefs. RC Director, Gregor Hodgson would like to thank hosts Sibarimar, Pronaturaleza and Centro Nacional de Areas Protegidas for organizing the workshop. For more information about RC Cuba, contact [Mario](#).



Team members smile for the camera upon completion of Cuba's first national training held July 8-11, 2003. Photo by Gregor Hodgson.

GOOD NEWS FROM RC IRAN

Mohammad Reza Shokri of the Iranian National Center for Oceanography brings us good news from Iran. In 2002, RC Iran surveyed sites around Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz. These sites experienced bleaching in 1998, with the branching corals hit the hardest. Mohammed reports significant recovery and rehabilitation since the 1998 bleaching event. In 1999, there were no branching corals around Kish Island, while in 2002 the majority of corals seen there were branching *Acropora*. Thank you Mohammed, mrshok@hotmail.com, for your update, and we look forward to hearing the status of these reefs in 2003.

REEF CHECK'S NEW WEBSITE

Look out for the launch of RC's new and improved website, scheduled for unveiling beginning of August. The new site will sport a new look, a new logo, and much more. Keep your eyes out for the switch!

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOUR TEAM IS UP TO!!

If you would like to submit a story or photographs for the next issue, please contact Kelly at rcheck2@ucla.edu. To be highlighted in the next edition of The Transect Line, all submissions must be received by August 29th, 2003.

Coral Reefs in the News

CARIBBEAN CORAL REEFS DECIMATED

In a study of Caribbean reefs, British researchers find that coral has declined by about 80 percent in some areas, a loss that may take many decades to recover. The study examined the health of the coral reefs across the whole Caribbean basin and found that at some sites the coverage of coral has dropped from 50 percent to only about 10 percent in just three decades. Visit <http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/07/17/coolsc.coral/index.html> for the full report.

PEW OCEANS COMMISSION REPORT

The Pew Oceans Commission, an independent group conducting research on U.S. oceans and ocean policies (and a TOP Partner), has announced the release of their long-awaited final report. The report, to be released June 4, discusses the state of the nation's oceans, reviews U.S. ocean policy, and provides recommendations on how to restore, protect, and govern marine resources in U.S. waters. The Commission has already released reports on coastal sprawl, marine pollution, marine aquaculture, introduced species, and fisheries. These reports are all available on the Commission's website, www.pewoceans.org.

GREAT FISH GOING THE WAY OF THE DINOSAURS

Ninety percent of all large fish in the world's oceans are gone, and just 10 percent remain after commercial fishing vessels have taken their toll over the past 50 years, according to a long term study conducted by Canadian and German scientists and released today. The scientists say there is an urgent need to attempt fisheries restoration on a global scale. For more information, visit <http://ens-news.com/ens/may2003/2003-05-14-03.asp>.

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

[CEA](http://ceakumal.org/bceas_electronic_newsletter_edition_8_may_2003.html) - http://ceakumal.org/bceas_electronic_newsletter_edition_8_may_2003.html

[LMMA](http://www.immanetwork.org/Content/Newsroom/Newtowk-Wide-Newsletters.html) - <http://www.immanetwork.org/Content/Newsroom/Newtowk-Wide-Newsletters.html>

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