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Reef Check Teams in Action

RODRIGUES (Mauritius)

by Sabrina Meunier

The island of Rodrigues, part of the Republic of Mauritius, is isolated by 500 km of Indian Ocean with a wide encircling lagoon and large community of fishers. RC was first introduced to the island by monitoring specialist Dr. Helge Vogt in 1999. Since 2001 RC has operated out of a local non-profit, Shoals Rodrigues, <http://www.shoals-rodrigues.org>, which is dedicated to local marine research, education and training activities. RC is used by Shoals as the first training target for new qualified divers and members. The team focuses their time on two sites on the north side of the island, where the foliose coral shapes tend to dominate. Some areas of the north were bleached quite badly earlier this year, so having the past three years of data has proved to be incredibly valuable. The data have been used to help design a network of marine reserves are soon to be declared on Rodrigues. For more information contact Sabrina, shoals.rod@intnet.mu.



ST LUCIA

by Susanna Scott

In 1999, five RC sites were established in the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA), <http://www.smma.org.lc>, in St Lucia. However, in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the status of coral reefs in Saint Lucia, in 2002, RC activities were expanded and a site was established at an offshore island (Maria Island in the south) and another off the village of Laborie (south west). In early 2003, yet another site was established, this time in the north of the island. Today, RC activities are carried out annually and spearheaded by the Department of Fisheries, <http://www.slumaffe.org/>, in collaboration with the Soufriere Marine Management Area. Dive operators continue to support RC activities by providing tank refills and other equipment. In 2003, the St. Lucia Reef Check team has conducted 11 surveys at 8 sites. For more information, contact Susanna, deptfish@slumaffe.org.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by Bill Kiene



RC has established a new country program in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with the support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, <http://www.packard.org/>. This new program builds on the work of Norman Quinn and Mathew Motell, who managed the PNG program from 1997-2002. John Aini, PNG's new coordinator, will be overseeing RC trainings and surveys in Kavieng, Kimbe, and Port Moresby, as well Madang and Milne Bay. All activities are being generously sponsored by local dive operators, resorts and research centers such as Walindi Plantation Resort, Lissenung Island Resort, Loloata Island Resort, National Fisheries College, Lissenung Island Resort

SCUBA Ventures-Kavieng, Malagan Resort, Madang Resort, Mahonia Na Dari, UPNG and Motupore Marine Research Centre. PNG is considered to contain some of the only remaining intact coral reef ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the fisheries that have decimated S.E. Asia's reefs are now targeting PNG's exceptional reef resources. It is hoped that John's efforts will help PNG make the choices necessary to maintain its productive marine environment as external market pressures increase. For more information contact John,

Spotlight on Reef Check Site- Vietnam

Vietnam is bordered by China, Laos and Cambodia. Results released by World Resources Institute in 2002 indicated that Vietnam's coral reefs are among the most threatened in the region. Destructive fishing practices, such as poison and blast fishing threaten as much as 85 percent of Vietnam's reefs while overfishing threatens more than 60 percent of Vietnam's reefs (Reefs at Risk Southeast Asia, 2002).

RC Vietnam has been in operation since 1998 and is led by Dr. Vo Si Tuan of the Institute of Oceanography of Nha Trang. On August 25-29, RC hosted a training in Haiphong, dedicated to expanding RC throughout the northern provinces. Participants included young agency staff from the relevant government departments. Despite the arrival of a typhoon on the first day of the Workshop, the training was extremely successful. Trainees were challenged by no electricity and no ferry transport but managed to make the best of things.

The Workshop was facilitated by Tran Dinh Lan of Haiphong Institute of Oceanography and the training was led by RC's Executive Director Gregor Hodgson and Dr. Vo Si Tuan. Participants spent a good deal of time conducting land-based training as the water was completely red from all the runoff.



RC Vietnam dive team deploys a marker buoy to prepare for their survey.
Photo Greg Hodgson.

The team was finally able to get in the water to carry out the first stage of the in-water training on the reef in 1 m visibility. As the visibility improved a complete RC was carried out by the students. Everyone was very enthusiastic about getting involved in more monitoring and in making an effort to work closer with staff from the Ha Long Bay Management Authority.

Most importantly, Dr. Dam Duc Tien of HIO, agreed to serve as the Vietnam Northern Area Coordinator and pledged to work with Dr. Vo Si Tuan to establish the first National Coral Reef Monitoring Network. HIO, IUCN and the consultants have agreed to carry out a second training workshop early in 2004 to analyze the data and interpret the results. For more information contact Vi So Tuan, thuysin@dnq.vnn.vn.

Trainings, Workshops, and Meetings

Upcoming

Recent Activities

DEMA SHOW, MIAMI

This was the second year that RC had a booth at DEMA's annual trade show held in Miami, October 8-11. RC volunteers provided eager dive professionals with information about how they could get involved, while Kelly met with travel agencies, resorts, dive operations and manufacturers to develop stronger corporate partnerships. RC teams including Fiji, Australia, Kosrae, Panama, Canada, Florida, and Mexico were all represented at DEMA this year, providing a wonderful opportunity for teams to collaborate and brainstorm on future activities. RC Canada launched a fabulous new t-shirt line, SeaTurtle Sportswear, and will be dedicating a percentage of each t-shirt sold to RC. As a result of all of our hard work, RC attracted new teams in Florida, Bahamas, Costa Rica, Belize, Venezuela, Honduras, Cozumel, and Tahiti. A huge thank you to Michele Sohn, Dan and Stephanie Clarke and Heather Froeming for all of the volunteer hours they dedicated to making DEMA a huge success!!



RC Florida coordinator Stephanie Clarke (left-back) and outreach volunteer Michele Sohn (right-back) with RC Canada coordinators Claude Duval (left) and Stephane Lagace (right) at DEMA. Photo K. McGee.

MACTAN ISLAND WORKSHOP- CEBU, PHILIPPINES



Participants from leading Mactan Island resorts joined together for an integrated RC training course to help monitor and better manage reef areas fronting their properties. Photo RC Philippines.

Some 30 participants and staff members, all from leading Mactan Island resorts, joined together on September 6 - 7 and 13 - 14, 2003 for an integrated RC training and reef management course. These innovative trainings, targeting many of the resort staff dive guides, are designed to assist the respective resorts to help monitor and better manage reef areas fronting their properties. The course was conducted by the Coastal Dynamics Foundation in partnership with the Ocean Care Advocates (an association of local concerned resorts and dive operators) under funding from East Asia and Pacific Environment Initiative (EAPEI). Special thanks to the Shangri-La

Mactan Island Resort where the workshops were held. In addition to EAPEI, these trainings were largely supported by contributions from the participating resorts and the City of Lapu Lapu - many thanks to all participants and supporters for a great training!

SE ASIA TRAINING

On October 5-11, RC Philippines hosted the Regional Southeast Asia "Training of Trainers" at the new SE Asia Regional Training Center, Cebu, Philippines. Building on the success of regional trainings conducted in 2001 and 2002 at the Phuket Marine Biological Center, Thailand, the training was supported by USAID / EAPEI. The training brought together highly qualified team leaders and scientists with the aim of increasing the number and quality of RC instructors and teams in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines as well as other participating SE Asian countries. For additional information, please contact Mike Ross at mikeross@mozcom.com.

DIVE EXPO, AUSTRALIA

by Jos Hill

RC Australia raised the flag at the Sydney Dive Expo this September along with a host of both Australian and Pacific dive operators, equipment and merchandise companies. Thanks to the generosity of Quiksilver International, the Dive Expo organizers and RC Headquarters, plus a little creative graphic design by Jos and volunteers in Townsville, RC Australia was able to set up an exhibit (along side the World Wide Fund for Nature). The expo was a huge success, RC volunteers from Sydney and Brazil answered queries from hundreds of visitors at the exhibition stand while Jos made sure she spoke to every person in the building about RC activities. The response was awesome with a 100% positive interest in RC from everyone we spoke to. We'd like to extend a thanks to everyone who was involved - the contacts made will undoubtedly push RC Australia to dizzying heights!



RC Australia Director, Jos Hill (right) and volunteer Julie Pritchard at Dive Expo 2003 in Sydney. Photo RC Australia.

WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN TRAINING

By Sammy Ndirangu

In June, RC hosted a "Training of Trainers" in Malindi, Kenya. The training was led by RC Europe Director, Georg Heiss and brought 25 participants from Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Zanzibar together to help form a solid RC presence in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. The training was sponsored by US NOAA with support from ICLAN-WIOMSA and UNEP. Kenya contributed the highest number of participants, coming from as far south as Shimoni and as far north as the Kenya-Somali border Kiunga. Kenya has committed to monitoring the entire coastline (approx. 600km) over the next year. Team members united with the saying "Hatucheki na watu tuna cheka na samaki " which means "We are are not laughing with people, we are laughing with fish" which will also be remembered as a theme of many evenings. RC WIO hopes that this sentiment can remain in the minds of all 25 participants for a long time to come, accompanied with a commitment to establish RC sites and teams in their regions. For more information, contact Sammy, gndirangus@yahoo.com.

CUBA TRAINING



RC Cuba ready to swim the long distance to Cuba's offshore reefs. Photo G. Hodgson.

In July, RC was asked by SIBARIMAR on behalf of UNDP to train 26 park rangers and managers from the new MPA network in Cuba. During the first week, the participants were formally trained in scuba at Guanabo – east of Havana. Several had been scuba diving for many years without a formal certification. This was followed by four days of classroom and in-water training with RC methods. The Cuban participants were enthusiastic, swimming long distances to reach the offshore reefs. Protecting coral reefs in Cuba is extremely important due to the fact that *Acropora palmata* (Elkhorn) stands there are some of the largest remaining in the Caribbean. On-going coral reef management work in Cuba will be supported by a

grant from the Oak Foundation, <http://www.oakfnd.org>. For more information contact Mario, sibarim@cubarte.cult.cu

Upcoming

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL TRAININGS

Over the next 6 months Andre Miller, RC Caribbean Director will be conducting trainings in St Vincent. Grenada. Dominica. St Kitts. Antigua and Tobago. This project was made possible

with the support of a UNEP/CZMU grant and is aimed at outreach to Caribbean countries that currently do not have an active RC Team as well as connecting with and supporting teams that were established at the last Atlantic training. For more information contact Andre, wetrootz@yahoo.com.

BELIZE TRAINING

November 12-13 a mini-training will be held for dive masters in San Pedro, Belize to kick off a new RC Belize project sponsored by the Oak Foundation. For information contact Robyn, robynwoodman@hotmail.com.

THAILAND TRAINING

Feb 29 to March 12, 2004 - Reef Check Training Course and Survey will be offered in the Andaman Sea on the West coast of Thailand. This course will be organised in collaboration with the Phuket Marine Biology Center (PMBC). This training is open to professionals in marine science and conservation, but also to non-professionals interested in learning more about coral reefs, marine biology and conservation, and monitoring techniques. For more information contact Georg, reefcheck2004@reefcheck.de.

MYANMAR EXPEDITION

March 16 – 26, 2004 - A 10-day Reef Check cruise and volunteer expedition will be offered to the reefs off Myanmar (Burma). The expedition will be conducting surveys of reefs of the Andaman sea with departure scheduled for March 16, from Ranong (Thailand). If weather conditions allow, the trip will cruise up to the Mergui archipelago. If you are interested to join this exciting trip, please respond soon by e-mail. Space is limited, we will accept volunteers on a "first come, first serve" basis. Contact Georg, reefcheck2004@reefcheck.de, for more information.

Reef Check Champion

This month we are highlighting Kimberly McCarty and Candice Ludkiewicz, two RC supporters who show that one person really **can** make a difference. If you know a Reef Check Champion that you would like to nominate, please email a brief description of their contribution as well as a photo (if possible) to Kelly, rcheck2@ucla.edu.

Every month, Reef Check receives hundreds of email from people all over the world inquiring about how they can help save coral reefs. Here are two inspirational stories that show how sometimes the smallest gesture can become the greatest contribution.

Wedding Bliss

In September, RC received an email from Candice Ludkiewicz, a certified scuba diver who was enquiring about the best locations in Fiji to dive as that is where she was going for her honeymoon. Candice and her fiancé were married on October 4th and in commemoration of their beautiful day, they are making a donation to RC on behalf of each of their 500 guests. Congratulations Candice and thank you for using this event to help conserve coral reefs!

Lemonade Anyone?

The following is a letter RC received in August from eight and a half year old Kimberly McCarty.

*Dear Reef Check,
After I saw a film about the Coral Reefs in the Museum of Science in Boston, MA, I decided to help the Coral Reefs. I had a lemonade stand to make money for the Coral Reefs. I made \$8.00, and I'm sending it to you. Please use my \$8.00 to the reefs who need it most.
From, Kimberly*



Kimberly's example of making a difference has touched many hearts as the story has been shared by RC staff. May Kimberly's efforts to help save coral reefs be an example to everyone that every effort counts.

Methods Check

UPDATED TRAINING MANUAL

RC Headquarters has been working away on a 'new and improved' version of our training manual. Improvements include updated pictures of indicators organisms for all regions and an easy to follow format. The manual will be printed and bound and copies will be sent to RC coordinators early in the new year. If you are not a coordinator and would like a copy of the revised manual please contact Tessa, rcinfo@ucla.edu.

Other Reef Check News

NEW STAFF AT RC HEADQUARTERS

RC Headquarters recently said goodbye to two of our staff, Craig Shuman and Lena Maun. Both were graduates of UCLA. Craig graduated with his doctorate from UCLA and decided to apply his new knowledge to local California issues and is working as a staff scientist for Heal the Bay while remaining on the RC Board. Lena decided to take a crack at government work and is working at the Port of Los Angeles in their environmental department. So, in order to fill their 'big' shoes, RC has hired two new staff:

Bill Kiene - Director for Conservation Science

In August, Dr. William Kiene joined Reef Check as Director for Conservation Science. Many of you have known and worked with Bill in his 25 years of coral reef research and conservation advocacy. Originating from land-locked Kansas, he chased reefs all the way to Australia, where he obtained his MSc and PhD during the 1980s studying the Great Barrier Reef. From 1991 to 1996 he held a research post in Germany, and conducted bio-erosion studies in Australia and in the Bahamas. In 1996 he moved to the Smithsonian in Washington DC where he developed public programs on coral reef science and conservation, while continuing research. From 2001 until joining RC in August 2003, Bill was field coordinator for a Wildlife Conservation Society program in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia that documented ecological and socio-economic impacts of coral reef management strategies. Bill has experience in coral reef science and conservation in the Pacific, West Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. He looks forward to working closely with all the RC Teams to help them effectively use the results of their surveys, and to helping promote their dedication and commitment to coral reef conservation. Bill can be contacted directly at wkiene@ucla.edu.

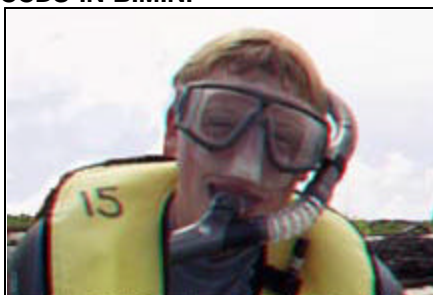


Bill searching for treasure in Papua New Guinea. Photo G. Hodgson

Ashley Spencer - Operations Coordinator

Ashley earned a B.A. in Political Science and Environmental Conservation from the University of New Hampshire in June 1995, and spent a semester in the Turks and Caicos Islands with the School for Field Studies studying tropical marine biology, resource management and socioeconomics. In an effort to affect change by working within the political arena to shape environmental policies, Ashley has worked with the NGO Clean Islands International and Baltimore County's Recycling Division. She received her NAUI Scuba Instructor certification in 1998 and has spent time teaching diving in the Caribbean which resulted in Ashley returning to school to pursue her love of coral reefs. In 2000, Ashley returned to school to become a marine biologist and enrolled at Tulane University where she was awarded a B.S. degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Ashley's interest in coral reef ecology and resource management has brought her to RC and she looks forward to working directly with RC teams to help create a stronger international RC community. Ashley can be contacted directly at rcheck@ucla.edu.

CCDS IN BIMINI



Smiling CCDS student Charles Covell was for RC action! Photo Kelly McGee.

In August, Outreach Director Kelly McGee joined seven middle school students from the Chicago City Day School (CCDS) aboard the Coral Reef II Research Vessel to train them in RC methods. The trip was a collaborative effort between CCDS and the Shedd Aquarium and was the first middle school excursion that Shedd had ever offered in their history of their education program. Everyone worked tirelessly on learning all of the RC methods and definitely set a high standard for all of the middle school classes to follow. RC looks forward to collaborating with Shedd on a variety of educational programs. A special thanks to

Captains John and Lou for making the trip memorable!!

RC DATA REVEALS RECOVERY FROM BLEACHING IN THE MAMANUCAS, FIJI.

by Ryan Walker

In response to the 2000 bleaching event, resulting in up to 80% coral mortality in some regions of the Fiji archipelago, the UK based NGO Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) in collaboration with the Fijian Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Civil Aviation, undertook repeat RC surveys at 22 sites in the Mamanucas Islands, western Fiji in 2001 and 2002.

Results revealed a 14.3% overall mean increase in scleractinian coral cover across the sites over the 12 month period. Non-*Acropora* corals increased from 9.8% in 2001 to 19.3% in 2002, whilst *Acropora* cover more than doubled from 3.3 to 8.0%. Between 2001 and 2002 the coral reefs of the Mamanucas progressed from “poor” to “fair” in accordance with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) systems for describing the health of coral reefs. This mean increase suggests a significant and encouraging recovery of scleractinian corals post bleaching in the Mamanucas region, an area famed for spectacular diving with a well-established tourist industry. The full paper will be published in the next edition of the *Silliman Journal*, or can be requested from the authors (Simon Harding sph@coralcay.org or Ryan Walker rw@coralcay.org).

CORAL REEFS AS EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: LEARNING WITH AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS.

by Carl Stepath

Teenagers from a number of high schools in Queensland are using the Great Barrier Reef as a classroom this year. Students are involved in interdisciplinary research investigating environmental learning, environmental attitudes and willingness to undertake environmental action in relation to the future social and ecological sustainability of coral reefs. This is a wonderful opportunity for different groups in the community to work together teaching students about the wonders of the coral reef, as they learn RC monitoring methodology. Funding and support for this project has been supplied by James Cook University, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre and PADI.



Students are introduced to RC through an interdisciplinary approach to research. Photo Carl Stepath

Carl Stepath, a PhD candidate at James Cook University, has organized his study so to involve students to take part in different marine education programs about coral reefs, based on programs developed by UNESCO and MTAQ (Marine Teachers Association of Queensland). Marine environmental education is the primary focus, but the state of coral reefs is also looked at. The aim is to monitor changes in the students' environmental awareness, attitudes and action skills with respect to coral reefs and education strategies. The research assesses the effectiveness of marine education programs in the region and contributes to developing tropical marine teaching strategies. Carl is exploring new ways of thinking about environmental knowledge, education and action with the use of RC methodology. For more information, contact Carl, carl.stepath@jcu.edu.au. (Editors note: Carl is the former RC Coordinators for Hawaii)

AWARD FOR RC HAWAII

This October, RC Hawaii and Island Divers, <http://www.islanddivershawaii.com>, received a 2003 Partnership Award from Coastal America for their contributions to the Alien Algae Research and Removal Project, known locally as A'ohe Limu E. RC Hawaii was one of nine across the nation selected by Coastal America to receive the award, recognized for providing volunteers for the project. Island Divers was acknowledged for contributing air tanks and other logistical support. Mahalo to Dave Raney and Matt Zimmerman, and to the many enthusiastic RC volunteers who have contributed so much time and energy to this very worthwhile community project.

EARTHWATCH IN PHILIPPINES

by Vangie White, Finance Manager and Board Secretary

The Saving Philippine Reefs Program, <http://www.earthwatch.org/expeditions/white.html>, of CCE Foundation successfully conducted its 7th Earthwatch Expedition last April 11-30, 2003 in Bohol. The expedition included volunteers from USA, Australia, England, Indonesia and Malaysia—and of course Filipino staff from CCE Foundation, Silliman University and the University of San Carlos. Bohol had not been surveyed since 1999 so Earthwatch volunteers

were put to work using RC methods to continue on where past teams had left off. The data will supplement the coral reef monitoring aspect of the existing Bohol Marine Triangle Project with which CCE Foundation is a one of its collaborators. Data collected in the various communities adds to the Marine Protected Area Project of CCE Foundation and will assist the MPA managers of the area. The report will be available in July of this year. For more information contact Melody, ccef@mozcom.com.

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](#). To be highlighted in the next edition of The Transect Line, all submissions must be received by December 12th, 2003.

Coral Reefs in the News

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Curacao Sea Aquarium - <http://www.curacao-sea-aquarium.com/news/>

MAC - <http://macweb.inets.com/webmediainfo.asp?librarybelong=19§ion=15>

**Reef Check
Institute of the Environment
1362 Hershey Hall, Box 951496
University of California at Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1496 USA
1-310-794-4985 (phone) 1-310-825-0758 (fax)
rcheck@UCLA.edu**