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BELIZE

Reef Check Belize gained momentum in 2003 with a two-day “mini” training session held in November and conducted by Reef Check Executive Director Gregor Hodgson. The session was held at the Belize Yacht Club in San Pedro. Taking part in the training were members of the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Green Reef Environmental Institute, and local dive operations.

This year also saw the development of a Belize/Cuba project sponsored by the Oak Foundation. This program will provide funding to study approximately 30 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Through this funding, Reef Check hopes to train 40 people and conduct 30 surveys in Belize alone. For more information, check out the [newspaper article](#) from The San Pedro Sun.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Contributed by [Trish Baily](#)

Reef Check in the British Virgin Islands was conducted this year using the ecosailing sailboat Serendipity as its base. [Trish Baily](#) (ecosail@surfbvi.com), the Reef Check coordinator for BVI, is also the captain of the charter boat. The 2003 Reef Check team consisted of visitors to the island from New York, and included the owner of Serendipity. Serendipity sailed around to the various sites and coordinated daily with [Aquaventure Scuba](#) (www.aquaventurebvi.com) who provided the dive masters and equipment for the Reef Checks.



Prior to Reef Check, two days were spent getting the divers comfortable with their surroundings working on fish identification and familiarizing them with the Reef Check protocol. At the end of the day the team relaxed on board, snorkeled and enjoyed a tranquil anchorage for the night. For more information on RC BVI or the Serendipity, contact [Trish Baily](#) (ecosail@surfbvi.com) or [click here](#) (www.sailserendipity.com).

HAITI

Contributed by [Dulcie Linton](#)

As part of an effort to improve coral reef monitoring and reporting on the status of coral reefs in the countries of the Northern Caribbean node of the [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](#) (GCRMN) (www.gcrmn.org), a team of scientists led by the Caribbean Coastal Data Centre (CCDC), Centre for Marine Sciences, University of the West Indies, visited Haiti during the period September 15-20 and conducted training in the Reef Check method of coral reef monitoring and collected data from some reef sites at Les Arcadins and the surrounding coastline. The team members were drawn from a number of organizations based in Jamaica and were led by Team Leader [Dulcie Linton](#) (Manager, Caribbean Coastal Data Centre) (dmlinton@uwimona.edu.jm) and Team Scientist Peter Edwards (Scientific Officer, Centre for Marine Sciences).

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RC Haiti Team members: (from left) Nathalie Zenny, Brandon Hay, Peter Edwards, Jean Wiener, Mandy Karnauskas, Boatman, Dulcie Linton, Dave Guinness and George Warner (Inset: Krishna Desai)
Photo by K. Desai

The team worked in close collaboration with Jean Wiener, Director of Foundation pour la Protection de la Biodiversite Marine (FoProBIM), a Non-Governmental environmental organization in Haiti. A two-member team from Haiti, including Jean Wiener (FoProBIM) and Mandy Karnauskas, a Peace Corps volunteer, were trained during the period. The poor economic climate in Haiti is largely responsible for the lack of trained divers to participate in the exercise. Dive gear, air fills and facilities for training are not readily available and therefore are expensive to acquire, so that diving is not an exercise that ordinary Haitians participate in. Additionally, Haiti does not have any tertiary

institution which focuses on education in marine sciences from which graduates would be available for training.

A diving team of eight individuals conducted the monitoring, which was focused in the Les Arcadins area of Haiti, situated along the west coast of Haiti. The area boasts three small islands which are surrounded by extensive coral reefs. Visual surveys of the sites revealed generally healthy reefs. For more detailed analysis, read the [full report: Reef Check Training and Coral Reef Monitoring in Haiti: A Preliminary Report](#). For more information, contact [Dulcie Linton](mailto:dmlinton@uwimona.edu.jm) (dmlinton@uwimona.edu.jm).

HONDURAS

Contributed by Jon Shrives

[Operation Wallacea](http://www.opwall.com) (www.opwall.com), a volunteer-based research eco-tourism group, has been conducting Reef Check surveys in the Wakatobi Marine Park, Indonesia, for the last five years. In February 2003, Operation signed an agreement with the Honduran Coral Reef Foundation, to cooperatively research the Cayos Cochinos Marine Protected Area. June 2003 saw the running of the first season of Operation Wallacea in the Cayos Cochinos and Honduras. The Reef Check method has facilitated the collection of baseline data for the construction of further research programs in 2004. It has also allowed the collection of data on an area of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System that has not previously been studied by Reef Check.

This season acted as a "pilot season" for the much larger scale operation of the 2004 season. As such, volunteer numbers and resources were limited and, due to logistical constraints, only a handful of sites (5) could be selected to represent the entire Marine Protected Area. It is hoped that Reef Check 2004 in the Cayos Cochinos will re-visit the same sites, as well as dramatically expand its range. For more information check out the [Operation Wallacea website](#) (www.opwall.com) or contact [Jon Shrives](mailto:jonshrives@yahoo.com) (jonshrives@yahoo.com). [Click here](#) for the full report, including the survey results.

JAMAICA

Contributed by Dulcie Linton

The Jamaica Coral Reef Monitoring Network (JCRMN), led by the Caribbean Coastal Data Centre (CCDC), Centre for Marine Sciences, University of the West Indies, completed a successful Reef Check training workshop in Negril, 6-7 September, 2003. This workshop is one of a number of planned activities geared at increasing monitoring of Jamaica's coral reefs, particularly along the south coast, and falls within the regional mandate of the CCDC to improve available information on the status of reefs in the [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](http://www.gcrmn.org) (GCRMN) (www.gcrmn.org) Northern Caribbean and Atlantic node countries. Through a grant from the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) project of the United Nations Environment Programme, Caribbean

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Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), the CCDC's capacity has been strengthened to coordinate collection of and reporting on data and information on coral reef status in node countries.



RC workshop participants assemble in front of the offices of the NCRPS prior to the start of monitoring exercises
Photo by Peter Edwards

A total of 17 individuals participated in the training with Malden Miller of ICRAN, UNEP as the team leader and trainer. These trained individuals will form a core group of divers who will support future monitoring activities of the JCRMN. In partnership with rangers from the Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society (NCRPS) monitoring was conducted September 6-7. Three of the four NCRPS survey sites, Bloody Bay, Ireland Pen, and Little Bay were surveyed on Saturday and El Punto Negrilo on Sunday the 7th. For analysis of their data, read the

[full report](#) on **Jamaica Coral Reef Monitoring Network (JCRMN) Reef Check Training Workshop and Data Collection in the Negril Marine Park**. For more information, contact [Dulcie Linton](mailto:dmlinton@uwimona.edu.jm) (dmlinton@uwimona.edu.jm).

US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Contributed by **Jason Vasques**

Reef Check in the US Virgin Islands got a kick-start with help from a habitat assessment grant from the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Under this grant, a Reef Check was conducted on Savana Island off St. Thomas. The team, comprised entirely of marine scientists, included three scientists from the USVI Division of Fish and Wildlife and a postdoc fellow at the University of the Virgin Islands. Under this grant surveys are planned to continue at Savana Island and other sites around St. Thomas. Contact [Jason Vasques](mailto:vasques@vipowernet.net) (vasques@vipowernet.net) for more information.

Indo-Pacific

FIJI

Contributed by **Helen R. Sykes**

[Mike's Divers](mailto:mikesdivers@connect.com.fj) (mikesdivers@connect.com.fj) and [Diveaway](mailto:diveawayfiji@connect.com.fj) (diveawayfiji@connect.com.fj) at [Hideaway Resort](mailto:hideaway@connect.com.fj) (hideaway@connect.com.fj) on the Coral Coast of Fiji Islands have become Reef Check supporters. Over the 3 days of 22-24th July 2003, we trained resort and diving personnel in survey techniques so that they could conduct regular update surveys, and gain their own knowledge of the reef health in the area. There was a lot of enthusiasm from staff of both the Dive Operations and the Resort.

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We spent three days training and carrying out surveys. During this time we re-surveyed two sites and set up permanent transects at Votua village outside Mike's Divers. This initial survey will be used as a baseline for further study both inside and outside a recently established Marine Protected Area at the village of Votua. The hope is to develop a guest participation programme for future surveys at both dive operations. Interested divers should contact [Alex Hill \(diveawayfiji@connect.com.fj\)](mailto:diveawayfiji@connect.com.fj) or [Phylis Jaureguy \(mikesdivers@connect.com.fj\)](mailto:mikesdivers@connect.com.fj).



During the dives, buddy teams surveyed the lines together then combined their results. We were delighted to find many new hard coral colonies on both the sites surveyed. For more information on what was found, read the [full report](#). For more information, contact Helen at [Resort Support \(resortsupport@connect.com.fj\)](mailto:resortsupport@connect.com.fj).

INDONESIA

Contributed by Naneng Setiasih

In the past year, Reef Checks were conducted at 72 sites in 36 locations in 12 provinces. These surveys involved at least 486 volunteers and participants, and were supported by approximately 70 local organizations/institutions.

2003 RC activities, including two Earth Day events, were covered by magazines, TV stations, newsletters, newspapers, and radio stations. The development of the RC Network in Indonesia was presented and socialized at one national (COREMAP National Workshop) conference and two international events (the ITMEMS II, the Philippines and Reef Check Regional Training, Cebu, the Philippines).

The majority of Reef Check activities (53 sites) in Indonesia this year were funded by Reef Check International. The average grants available for each location, including the press conferences and media events were US\$ 240 to US\$ 290. Some activities were funded by individual institutions. The number of sites shows an increase of approximately 100% compared to the 2002 data, despite the lower amount of grant money provided by Reef Check Indonesia. This was achieved by widening the network and its support, through increasing the awareness and involvement of local stakeholders. There were a growing number of organisations and institutions conducting Reef Check in Indonesia and report directly to Reef Check International. As a result, Reef Check Network Indonesia (RCNI) decided to run as an independent entity starting this year. WWF Indonesia provided substantial support by hosting RCNI, and actively advising the process. For more information, contact Naneng (nsetiasih@wallacea.wwf.or.id).

ACEH

Contributed by Ton Egbers & Marjan van der Burg

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The inaugural RC team in Pulau Weh, Aceh, April 2003
Photo by Ton Egbers & Marjan van der Burg

In April, Reef Check Indonesia expanded its horizons by doing the first ever Reef Check in Pulau Weh, Aceh, the most northwestern tip of Indonesia. Led by [Ton Egbers & Marjan van der Burg](#) (lumba2@aceh.wasantara.net.id) from the [Lumba Lumba Diving Centre](#) (www.pulauweh.com), their efforts to continue Reef Check here have not come without challenges. The province has been under martial law since May and foreign

tourists are currently not allowed in. As a result, all dive operations on the island of Sabang, where Ton and Marjan are located, have essentially ceased. Despite this, they were still able to resurvey the same site in October, albeit at a smaller scale than was originally planned.

CENTRAL SULAWESI

Contributed by **Abigail Moore**

[Abigail Moore](#) (abigailyacl@yahoo.com) of [YACL](#) (Yayasan Adi Citra Lestari) (www.yacl-sulawesi.org), has been busy with Reef Check in Central Sulawesi this year. In addition to her Reef Check activities, a year-long turtle data collection and conservation programme was initiated in the Pulau Pasoso MPA. [Click here](#) to read her full report on **Reef Check Central Sulawesi 2003**.

SOUTHEAST SULAWESI

Contributed by **Jane Smith**

The Tukang Besi Archipelago is a remote island group of about 200,000 ha, off S.E Sulawesi. It consists of all the major reef formations – atolls, barrier, fringing and patch reefs. There are 4 major islands – Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko with a total of about 100,000 people. Reef Check got off to a great start in the Wakatobi Marine National Park during the 2003 season. A total of 16 sites were surveyed during the period of July- August by 23 volunteers from diverse backgrounds including divers, students and members of the local community.

The majority of the data collection took place from a locally owned boat, the Sama Bahari. Reef Check teams lived aboard the boat for 4-5 days, allowing many of the outer lying reefs to be surveyed. Close access to the reefs was achieved using the rubber dingy (volunteers initially found kitting up to be very challenging!). A big thanks to all the volunteers who participated in the 2003 season. We hope the 2004 season will be just as successful. Contact [Jane Smith](#) (jesmitp@essex.ac.uk) for more information.



Close access to the reefs was achieved using a rubber dingy
Photo by Jane Smith

MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, three separate Reef Check teams surveyed the country's reefs. This summer, an expedition from Singapore surveyed 15 sites in the Pulau Banggi Region. Coral Cay Conservation also surveyed sites (see below for more details). RC coordinator [Badrul Huzaimi](#) (badrul_h@hotmail.com) led teams in surveying an additional eight reefs in September and October. This last set of surveys drew the attention of local media- 3 articles can be found on The Star Online. Click on the following to read: [Vital corals under threat](#), [Methodical marine monitor](#), and [Practical procedure](#).

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MAYOTTE

Contributed by Fany Seguin

Mayotte is a French Overseas Territory located in the SW Indian Ocean, NW of Madagascar. This small island is encircled by a 200 km-long barrier reef, which was severely affected by the 1998 bleaching episode. In contrast, the fringing reefs were little affected by the bleaching and are in a better condition than the barrier reef.



An RC Mayotte team member during a survey
Photo by Fany Seguin

In 2001, despite gaining the support of the local Fisheries and marine Environment Office, as well as of reef scientists from mainland France, the data from the first RC surveys conducted by local volunteers and divers could not be used due to the lack of a reef scientist on the team.

In 2002, Stéphanie Hernandez (who runs a dive club) and [Fany Seguin](#) (marine consultant) (f.seguin1@wanadoo.fr) decided to restart RC, supported by Michel Pichon (French coordinator). Three sites were chosen and training sessions on RC methodology were held for the divers. Three dive clubs participated in the surveying.

It has been difficult to organize Reef Checks since the team does not receive financial support from any agency. Some local companies or administrations have helped RC by giving or lending materials. The financial problem could be solved by the creation of a local RC association, but many people don't stay in Mayotte long enough to do so. Still, RC Mayotte is a success. After 2 years of activity, many people want to participate and local newspapers report on RC activities. For more information, contact [Fany](#) (f.seguin1@wanadoo.fr).

NEW CALEDONIA

Contributed by Laurent Wantiez

In New Caledonia, surveying ended on December 20th. This year, the survey program has been extended to all New Caledonia territory including North Province (9 sites) and Island Province (8 sites). Previously, only the South Province (15 sites) has been part of the program. The ROCR-NC (Réseau d'observation des Récifs Coralliens) program for 2003-2005 is being financed by the French Initiative for Coral Reefs in New Caledonia (IFRECOR-NC). RC coordinator [Laurent Wantiez](#) (wantiez@univ-nc.nc) sent us three press articles on RORC-NC activities that were published in local newspapers:

[Le bilan de sante annuel de nos recifs reactive](#)

[Mise en place du reseau d'observation des recifs corallines](#)

Les Cahiers de l'agriculture et de l'environnement: [Le récif corallien: un écosystème à protéger](#)

PHILIPPINES

Contributed by Laurie Raymundo

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Reef Check surveys have been performed on Apo Island Marine Reserve since 1998. To date, we have a continuous 6-year data set from permanent transects within the reserve, assessed each year between August and September. Our volunteer divers have included members of the Apo Island community, dive operators from the White Tip Dive Shop, members of the local press, graduate and undergraduate students, Peace Corps volunteers, and sport divers from Dumaguete City. This year, our surveys were conducted solely by undergraduate and graduate students of Silliman University and participants from the Apo community. The Reef Check methodology has been incorporated as a laboratory in Dr. Raymundo's Coral Reef Ecology course, so Biology seniors at Silliman University are being trained in this methodology and have taken over the surveys since 2002.



An RC team member surveys the Apo Island Marine Reserve
Photo by Laurie Raymundo

The annual Reef Check surveys of the Apo Island sanctuary have produced one of the few long-term data sets of this kind. Although extensive work has been done on the Apo Island fishery, no regular monitoring has been accomplished on substrate composition and the benthic community, and even fish data are usually collected intensively for short periods rather than annually for an extended period. Through such monitoring, we have been able to record and monitor responses to a major bleaching event, and quantify reef recovery over time. [Click here](#) to read [Laurie Raymundo's \(lauriejr@dgte.mozcom.com\)](mailto:lauriejr@dgte.mozcom.com) full report.

SRI LANKA



The RC Sri Lanka team, from left: Nishan, Chandima, Malik, Terney, Arjan and Chaminda
Photo by Arjan Rajasuriya

In September 2003, Reef Check Sri Lanka surveyed three sites- Coral Island, Pigeon Island, and Dutch Bay in Trincomalee. These sites are the first for the country to be added into the Reef Check global database. Activities were led by [Arjan Rajasuriya \(arjan@nara.ac.lk\)](mailto:arjan@nara.ac.lk) and Malik Fernando.

UNITED STATES- HAWAII

Contributed by Captain Paul Clark

On October 5, 2003, student participants in [Save Our Seas'](http://www.saveourseas.org) (www.saveourseas.org) project Ocean Pulse at Sea sailed on Blue Dolphin Charters' drug free sailing vessel, "The Tropic Bird." Save Our Seas, a non-profit based in Kauai, has been active with Reef Check since 1997 when they organized the very first Reef Check. Students from the Kapa'a Children's Discovery Museum and Myron B. Thompson Academy, as well as community members, were taught by local educators from UH Sea Grant, Reef Check, NOAA, and SOS about the flora, fauna and geology of Kipu Kai and Maha'ulepu. A Reef Check survey was performed within the Nawiliwili harbor inside the break wall, and a myriad of interesting and unique reef creatures and fish were found and surveyed. This trip was also filmed by Storyteller Media, an international film crew from Australia. For more information about this unique drug free marine education program, contact [Save Our Seas \(SOS@saveourseas.org\)](mailto:SOS@saveourseas.org).

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Some news for 2004

[Reef Check Europe](http://www.reefcheck.de) (www.reefcheck.de) and Europe Conservation Switzerland are jointly organising two exciting events in February/March 2004:

1. From Feb 29 to March 12, 2004 we are offering a Reef Check Training Course and Survey in the Andaman Sea at the West coast of Thailand. This course will be organised in collaboration with the Phuket Marine Biology Center (PMBC).
2. From March 16 – 26, 2004 we are offering a 10-day Reef Check cruise and volunteer expedition to the reefs off Myanmar (Burma). We will be conducting surveys in the reefs of the Andaman sea for 10 days, departure is scheduled for March 16 from Ranong (Thailand). If weather conditions allow, we will be cruising up to the Mergui-archipelago.

If you are interested in joining either of these trips, please respond soon by [e-mail](mailto:reefcheck2004@reefcheck.de) (reefcheck2004@reefcheck.de). Space is limited, we will accept volunteers on a "first come, first serve" basis. Find more information about this trip and Reef Check 2001 and 2003 in Burma on <http://www.reefcheck.de/en> and <http://marinasia.com>.

Persian Gulf

IRAN

Contributed by Mohammad Shokri

In Iran, Reef Check surveys were carried out at two sites in 2003. RC coordinator [Mohammad Shokri](mailto:mrshok@hotmail.com) (mrshok@hotmail.com) surveyed one station located in the northern Persian Gulf, Nay Band Bay, where the Reef Check 2000 data was collected. According to Mohammed, the patch corals at this area live under severe anthropogenic impacts because of one of the biggest Oil & Gas development projects in the "PARS Special Energy Zone" region. The Reef Check survey in this area has produced very important data to determine any changes in coral community due to the above mentioned project. He is currently preparing a report about the coral communities of this area by using the data of Reef Check 2000 and 2003. For more information, contact [Mohammad](mailto:mrshok@hotmail.com) (mrshok@hotmail.com).

Red Sea

EGYPT

In 2003, Reef Check Egypt was comprised of 4 teams led by Constanze Conrad, Georg Heiss, Mohammed Kotb, and Gert Woerheide.

SOUTHERN EGYPT

Contributed by Constanze Conrad

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The RC Egypt team, from left: Ursula Tisjaru, Aymán Taher, Claudia & Norbert Kuck, Jennifer McGarty, Constanze Conrad
Photo by Constanze Conrad

Reef Check 2003 in southern Egypt ended successfully. Team Leader [Constanze Conrad \(BlueHeavenHolidays@gmx.net\)](mailto:BlueHeavenHolidays@gmx.net) managed to arrange two Reef Checks, held in May and September, in the southern Red Sea area. 31 Volunteers from Egypt, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, The Netherlands, UK and USA came especially to participate in Reef Check.

Thanks to the support of [Blue Heaven Holidays \(www.blueheavenholidays.com\)](http://www.blueheavenholidays.com), all Reef Check teams were based at Tondoba Bay, 14 km south of Marsa Alam, a newly developed bay and diving destination with upcoming, fast growing diving tourism. In all, 7 sites have been surveyed- five of them new sites never surveyed before and two sites that have been regularly surveyed since Reef Check 2001.

Some news for 2004:

Blue Heaven Holidays is exhibiting on the BOOT 2004 (January 17 – 25, 2004) in Düsseldorf, Germany, the biggest European diving and watersport fair. As a sponsor of Reef Check, Blue Heaven Holidays is giving Constanze the opportunity to join them as a Reef Check representative at their stand.

On Saturday the 24th of January 2004 a special event, the Reef Check Reunion Day, is planned at the stand of Blue Heaven Holidays (stand number 3 C81) where all volunteers who have ever participated in a Reef Check program in Egypt (or elsewhere) can meet again. Please contact [Constanze \(BlueHeavenHolidays@gmx.net\)](mailto:Constanze@BlueHeavenHolidays@gmx.net) for details.

SHARM EL SHEIK, SINAI

Contributed by Gert Wörheide

Six dedicated divers from Germany followed team scientist [Gert Wörheide \(gert.woerheide@reefcheck.de\)](mailto:gert.woerheide@reefcheck.de) to Sharm el Sheik, September 30 2003 to October 05 2003. Besides Gert Wörheide, who has been involved in Reef Check in this region since 1997, it was the first Reef Check campaign for all volunteers. Due to excellent preparation at home, only brief training and familiarization with Reef Check procedures was necessary on site. During the 5 days of diving, three transects were checked at Ras Ghozlani (Ras Mohamed National Park), Jackson Reef (Straits of Tiran) and Ras Bob (close to Naama Bay). A planned check at Yolanda Reef (Ras Mohamed) could not be performed because the transect line (with a brand-new reel!) was stolen from the site. The end of September is peak season for this highly popular dive region and recreational divers were always present at or near the Reef Check sites, often swimming through the transect. Without the extensive help and cooperation of the guides and staff from [Sinai Divers \(www.sinaidivers.com\)](http://www.sinaidivers.com), our local partners, this successful trip would not have been possible! All team members enjoyed a nice and very memorable Reef Check trip to a still very beautiful dive area.



RC Sharm el Sheik team: Dr. Kathrin Priess, Friedenke Hoffmann, Dr. Gert Wörheide, Olaf Imkemeyer, Dr. Kathrin Bendixen, Sven Possner Photo by Gert Wörheide

Coral Cay Conservation

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CORAL CAY CONSERVATION

Contributed by Simon Harding and Ryan Walker

Volunteers from the UK based NGO [Coral Cay Conservation](http://www.coralcay.org) (www.coralcay.org) have had a successful year undertaking Reef Check surveys to complement the standard CCC baseline surveys and capacity building work guided by CCC's respective in-country counterpart organisations. Surveys were completed at four CCC projects: **Fiji, Honduras, the Philippines and Malaysia.**

CCC volunteers revisited 22 reef locations in the Mamanucas island group, Fiji to collect the third year of data assessing reef status in the region. A further 4 sites were surveyed for the first time. New locations were also surveyed at the other two CCC Indo-Pacific projects in the Perhentian Islands, Malaysia (3 sites) and Sogod Bay, Southern Leyte in the Philippines (4 sites). With the exception of the surveys in Fiji, all sites were surveyed at two depth bands.

In Honduras, CCC's RC surveys were centered on the north shore of the island of Roatan, one of the three main Bay Islands. Twenty RC surveys were undertaken at shallow depths, with a further 22 at medium depths. For more information, contact [Simon \(sph@coralcay.org\)](mailto:sph@coralcay.org) or [Ryan \(rw@coralcay.org\)](mailto:rw@coralcay.org).

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