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DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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EDA
جمعية الإمارات للغوص
Emirates Diving Association

CONTENTS

DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Please note that EDA's magazine, "Divers for the Environment" includes articles written by individuals whose opinions, whilst valid, may or may not represent that of EDA. It is hoped that the magazine can become a platform for individuals to voice their opinion on marine and diving related issues. You are welcome to submit an article for the next issue of "Divers for the Environment" released in December 2010. Send all articles, feedback or comments to: magazine@emiratesdiving.com.

EDA COVER
PHOTO BY WARREN BAVERSTOCK

REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE

RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE AFTER YOU HAVE READ IT.

CONTENTS

RAMADAN KAREEM & EID MUBARAK

Dear EDA Members,

Ramadan Kareem & Eid Mubarak! We hope the holy month of Ramadan will bring you and your families all the best. Have a wonderful Eid!

From the EDA Team <'))><

Bluespotted Stingray, Terengganu – Malaysia by Antonie Robertson

THE WORLD COULD USE MORE DIVING ASSOCIATIONS

IBRAHIM N.AL-ZU'BI
EDA Executive Director

Since EDA came into existence, fellow divers from Saudi Arabia and Qatar have contacted us interested in setting up a similar organization in their own country. A divers union exists in Lebanon as well as several environmental diving NGOs in Egypt and Jordan and dive teams in Kuwait; however, EDA still remains the only voluntary non-profit diving association in the Gulf region and most probably in the Arab world. It fills me with immense pride to hear that EDA is being held up as a prime example of a successful organization in this field. This drives us even further to excel in our mission. A colleague from Costa Rica, after hearing about EDA's Cleanup Arabia Initiative, said, "we need to have an EDA in Costa Rica."

Having more organizations similar to EDA would support the industry and community in many ways:

1. The dive and sports industry would be better coordinated on the national level – This would be achieved by collaborating with international certification bodies such as PADI, BSAC, and CMAS. Divers would become more aware of the national regulations and guidelines and they would have a point of reference. For example, EDA has been a point of reference for UAE divers when it comes to the UAE Coast Guard. EDA has helped ensure that new regulations for dive boats are in line with safety measures.

2. The industry would have a neutral organization to rely on – I really find it disappointing when an international diving certification organization prefers to coordinate with its related dive centers only and little is done when the center faces a problem on the national level. Most of the time, UAE dive centers contact EDA for any help with regulations and communications with other government entities.

3. Divers would dive more safely – EDA has a database of officially certified dive centers and retailers in the UAE. We ensure that dive shops do not sell their license until EDA has made sure that all safety procedures are taken into consideration.

4. The community's level of environmental awareness would indirectly be raised – With websites and magazines, such as the one between your hands right now, more information is available to the diver and a forum is created to exchange ideas.

We're interested to know what you think of this. Does your country have a diving association? If not, do you believe it should?

This issue is rich and we hope you'll enjoy reading it. Delve into the world of whale sharks; find out how we are helping to protect them and how you can help! Discover who won the 2010 Digital Online Underwater Photography Competition and read about our latest Reef check news.

Finally, we're pleased to introduce the newly revamped EDA website. It is now available in Arabic so that our Arabic-speaking divers can benefit as well! Check it out at **www.emiratesdiving.com**.

Follow EDA on Twitter at **http://twitter.com/EDA_UAE**.

Become a fan of EDA, on **http://www.facebook.com/pages/Emirates-Diving-Association/140646949296859?v=wall&ref=ts**.

Wishing you all a Ramadan Kareem and Eid Mubarak!

Eco Regards,

Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi

Where else can you find immaculate dive sites? Nowhere... Djibouti is *unique* !

Explore corals from 0 to 25 meters, beyond naked rocks or sand. Greet the magnificent schools of fish.

Get together with Dolphins (large dolphin, China dolphin and long nozzle)
Sharks (white and black pointer, gray, zebra, eagle, nurse and Whale Shark)
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EDA

EDA WEBSITE REVAMP

EDA has finally revamped their website and branded EDA in the process! Although this has been done, we will continually work to improve it and make sure we have everything up to date for all our members to help and accomodate you the best way we can within the diving world of the UAE.

We have also changed our facebook group page to a fan page, please make sure to join us and catch all the latest news. This will ensure that we do not miss out on any messages you may have sent. The group page will eventually be deleted toward the end of the year to give everyone a chance to swap over.

Do you twitter?
Join our twitter page: **EDA_UAE**

We would like all our members, individual or commercial to be able to voice their concerns, suggestions, ask questions, receive answers and be able to interact with other members at all times. We hope that this will also help others better understand what EDA does and stands for in the UAE and enable us to continually support those who ask for EDA's services.

If you have any comments you would like to share with us regarding the website, please do not hesitate to share your thoughts and suggestions with us at:
projects@emiratesdiving.com.
www.emiratesdiving.com

FEATURED CREATURE

BLUESPOTTED STINGRAY *(Taeniura lymma)*

FEATURE **IUCN RED LIST – COMPAGNO, L.J.V** PHOTOGRAPHY **PHILIPPE LECOMTE**

A threatened Bluespotted Stingray

Local Species in the IUCN Red List 2010

RED LIST CATEGORY & CRITERIA:
NEAR THREATENED
Scientific Name: *Taeniura lymma*
Common Name: Bluespotted Stingray

Justification: Although very wide ranging and common, the Bluespotted Stingray (*Taeniura lymma*) is subject to human-induced problems because of heavy inshore fisheries in most places where it occurs, its attractiveness for the marine aquarium fish trade (small size and brilliant colour pattern) and, especially, by widespread destruction of its reef habitat.

Geographic Range: Widespread in the Indo-West Pacific, including South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania (Zanzibar), Kenya, Red Sea (Lohaja and Massaua), Saudi Arabia, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, Australia, Melanesia and Polynesia. No information exists on subpopulations.

Population Trend: Unknown

Habitat and Ecology: Characteristic of coral reef habitats. Also found foraging near seagrass patches. Moves with rising tide into shallow, sandy areas to feed on molluscs, and shelters in caves and under ledges when the tide falls. Despite its relative abundance in some areas, almost no information is available on its life history parameters (age at maturity, longevity, average reproductive age, generation time and annual fecundity are all unknown).

Major Threats: This ray is commonly taken where heavy artisanal and small-scale commercial fisheries occur in or around coral reef habitats. Additionally, it may possibly be exploited locally for capture for the marine aquarium trade. It is at risk in many areas because of its dependence on coral reef habitats. These are under massive assault from net, dynamite and cyanide fisheries for teleosts in many places where the species occurs. In East Africa, artisanal fishers catch *T. lymma* using bottom-set gillnets, longlines and skin-diving with spears, and also as bycatch in fence traps. Habitat loss and degradation therefore likely exert a significant impact on populations.

Conservation Actions: No conservation or management initiatives have been identified.

Citation: Compagno, L.J.V. 2005. Taeniura lymma. **In:** IUCN 2010. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2010.2.
www.iucnredlist.org

Previous feature creatures:
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
Hawksbill Turtle

NEAR THREATENED
Spotted Eagle Ray

DMEX
DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION

Dive Middle East Exhibition 2011

Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi

1-5 March

Dubai International Boat Show is once again proud to welcome back the Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX). Now in its 5th year, the exhibition is hosted in conjunction with Emirates Diving Association (EDA). DMEX continues to be recognised as the most successful dive exhibition within the Middle East, remaining as an established platform for trade professionals, supplies and services, dive operators, marine tourism dealers and manufacturers to showcase their products. The exhibition harnesses the majesty of the underwater world, by offering all participants the opportunity to explore the region from a different perspective, broaden horizons and meet with all the diving enthusiasts and professionals from all aspects of the diving industry.

Year on year DMEX continues to expand as increasing numbers of enthusiasts visit the exhibition. Over the five day showcase, DMEX offers all companies the perfect business opportunity to exchange ideas and build new working relationships.

The Middle East is home to some of the most spectacular dive sites known today, with temperate waters all year round, the region is fast developing as a popular dive destination. In a NEW exclusive feature DMEX will display the hottest marine tourism locations from regional and international waters.

Key DMEX highlights will include:

- Interactive demonstrations by qualified instructors within the DMEX dive pool
- Live & interactive presentations by industry professionals
- Explore and book your next diving holiday destination within the new "Marine Tourism Hub"
- Experience the latest industry news on diving equipment, technical diving specialities including the diving history of the UAE
- Discover scuba diving, gain the latest knowledge and up-to-date techniques and skills required to explore diving

ORGANISED BY DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE | IN ASSOCIATION WITH EDA Emirates Diving Association | IN CONJUNCTION WITH DUBAI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

Raise Your Profile!

Ensure your company is part of **DMEX 2011** and remain ahead of your competitors within this exciting and growing industry. DMEX offers the only dedicated platform to promote and sell your products and services to a captive audience including exclusive clientele, traders, dealers and the rising number of diving and leisure enthusiasts who visit year on year.


"We are seeing many more people become members this year, we have been signing up between 15 and 20 people each day and we have also signed contracts with four dive centres in the UAE – all of which were generated at the Dubai International Boat Show. We have also seen a noticeable increase through the show for the 'Discover Scuba' programme; the response has been amazing for the free test dive demonstrations. We have also signed very important partnership deals with Malaysia and Djibouti to cross promote our diving packages."

Ibrahim Al Zu'bi - Executive Director, Emirates Diving Association (EDA)

"The DMEX show at the Dubai International Boat Show is the perfect opportunity for us to present our new retail items, exciting dive trip options and PADI dive courses to the dive community in Dubai. We look forward to participating in 2011."

Simon Tambling - Managing Partner, Al Boom Diving

Limited Stand Space Available!

With the overwhelming amount of interest in DMEX 2011 and to avoid disappointment contact **Grant Robinson** on **+ 971 4 308 6451** or **grant.robinson@dwtc.com** to discuss your participation now!

Enhanced Stand Package:

Includes: DMEX stand pavilion design, carpeted floor covering, fascia, power point and spotlights, two chairs, a desk and a name panel

Participation Rates:

Loyalty Rate: 1,190 AED (326 USD) per sqm
(To qualify, companies must have exhibited in 2010)

Normal Rate: 1,215 AED (332 USD) per sqm
(Companies exhibiting for the first time)

www.boatshowdubai.com
www.emiratesdiving.com

ORGANISED BY DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE | IN ASSOCIATION WITH EDA Emirates Diving Association | IN CONJUNCTION WITH DUBAI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW | VENUE DUBAI INTERNATIONAL MARINE CLUB, MINA SEYAHI | A MEMBER OF AMIA, IFBSO THE WORLD'S LEADING BOAT SHOWS | ASSOCIATED EVENT

Information correct at time of print. Details are subject to change without prior notice.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Green Goes Mainstream: Biodiversity Is Climbing the Corporate Agenda.

Companies with 'Net Positive Impact' on Biological Diversity are Winners in Resource-Constrained World.

One in four global CEOs sees biodiversity loss as a strategic issue for business growth: Latin American and African CEOs are most concerned about impacts of biodiversity loss on business growth prospects – European CEOs are least concerned.

13 July, 2010 – Business leaders in biodiversity-rich developing economies are concerned about losses of 'natural capital', a new UN report launched today highlights.

Over 50 per cent of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) surveyed, see declines in biodiversity as a challenge to business growth.

The findings, compiled by a study of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), indicate that those corporate chiefs who fail to make sustainable management of biodiversity part of their business plans may find themselves increasingly out of step with the market place.

Another recent survey, also spotlighted in the TEEB report for business, shows rising interest among consumers with 60 per cent of those surveyed in America and Europe and over 90 per cent in Brazil aware of biodiversity loss.

Over 80 per cent of those consumers surveyed said they would stop buying products from companies that disregard ethical considerations in their sourcing practices.

The "TEEB for Business" report indicates that scrutiny of big business and its impacts on the world's natural capital is likely to intensify as better evaluations and assessments come to the fore.

The UK-based consultancy TruCost, on behalf of the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment, is set to publish a study on the activities of the world's top 3,000 listed companies, estimating that their negative impacts or 'environmental externalities' total around US$ 2.2 trillion annually.

Pavan Sukhdev, the TEEB Study Leader and also head of UNEP's Green Economy Initiative said: "Through the work of TEEB and others, the economic importance of biodiversity and ecosystems is emerging from the invisible into the visible spectrum. It is clear that some companies in some sectors and on some continents are hearing and acting on that message in order to build more sustainable, 21st century businesses".

Today's report, entitled "TEEB for Business" and part of a suite of reports being launched in the UN's International Year of Biodiversity, calls for companies to embrace concepts such as 'No Net Loss';'Ecological Neutrality' and ultimately 'Net Positive Impact' on the environment.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UNEP which hosts TEEB, said: "We are entering an era where the multi-trillion dollar losses of natural and nature-based resources are starting to shape markets and consumer concerns. How companies respond to these risks, realities and opportunities will increasingly define their profitability; corporate profile in the market-place and the overall development paradigm of the coming decades on a planet of six billion, going to over nine billion people by 2050".

Julia Marton-Lefevre, TEEB advisory board member and Director General of IUCN, which coordinated the TEEB for Business report, urged companies attending the 1st Global Business for Biodiversity Symposium at the Excel Centre in London on 13 July to back new and transformational policies such as those outlined in the report.

"Together governments and business, in both developed and developing economies, can show leadership by establishing networks of committed corporations across all sectors dedicated to achieving a 'Net Positive Impact' on biodiversity and ecosystem services".

The TEEB report cites the case of the multinational mining giant Rio Tinto as one company that has committed itself to achieving Net Positive Impact on biodiversity. In association with leading conservation experts the company has developed new ways of assessing the biodiversity values of its land holdings, and has begun to apply biodiversity compensation or 'offset' methodologies in Madagascar, Australia and North America.

Other companies with similar commitments on biodiversity include Walmart (Acres for America initiative), Coca Cola (water neutral by 2020) and BC Hydro (no net incremental ecological impact).

In addition to minimizing and mitigating adverse impacts, business can also generate revenue from conserving biodiversity and delivering ecosystem services. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries all depend on healthy ecosystems to ensure healthy profits.

The tourism sector has a major stake and role to play in conserving biodiversity. Realising its reliance on the biodiversity rich but fragile coral reefs, Chumbe Island Coral Park Ltd in Tanzania has invested over US$ 1.2 million to establish a marine park to protect the corals surrounding Chumbe Island. The company actively supports park management as well as its own resort facilities.

The "TEEB for Business" report, which will form part of a final TEEB synthesis report to be launched at a meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010, calls on professional associations to develop new accounting and reporting tools for business.

The measurement and valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in business is improving. The report recommends that accounting professions, financial reporting bodies and others should accelerate efforts to develop common standards and metrics to enable business to assess and disclose their biodiversity impacts and responses in annual reports.

Joshua Bishop, the TEEB for Business report coordinator and Chief Economist of IUCN, said: "Better accounting of business impacts on biodiversity – both positive and negative – is essential to spur change in business investment and operations. Smart business leaders realise that integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services in their value chains can generate

substantial cost savings and new revenues, as well as improved business reputation and license to operate."

In another recent report by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, business leaders expressed their vision of a sustainable future, which include "prices that reflect all externalities: costs and benefits" (WBCSD Vision 2050).

Steps in this direction are already being taken, as evidenced by the growth of markets for biodiversity and ecosystem services. Market data compiled by Forest Trends and the Ecosystem Marketplace showed:

- The certified agricultural products market was valued at over US$ 40bn in 2008 and may reach up to US$ 210bn by 2020.
- Biodiversity offsets, such as wetland mitigation banking in the United States or 'bio-banking' in Australia, are predicted to rise from US$ 3 billion in 2008 to US$ 10 billion in 2020.
- Bio carbon/forest offsets including REDD are expected to rise from just US$ 21m in 2006 to over $10bn in 2020.

Starting today, businesses can show leadership on biodiversity and ecosystem services by:

1. Identifying their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity and ecosystem services
2. Assessing the business risks and opportunities associated with these impacts and dependencies
3. Developing BES information systems, set targets and report results
4. Taking action to avoid, minimize and mitigate BES risks
5. Integrating BES actions with wider Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives
6. Engaging with business peers and stakeholders to improve guidance and policy
7. Grasping emerging BES business opportunities

The TEEB for Business report will be launched at the first Global Business of Biodiversity Symposium on 13 July at the Excel Centre, London. **http://www.businessofbiodiversity.co.uk/**

The TEEB for Business report is available at **www.teebweb.org**

The lead authors and editors of the TEEB for Business report include staff from Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), Earthmind, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

The survey of CEOs and their attitudes to biodiversity loss was carried out by Price Waterhouse Coopers.

The survey of consumer attitudes to biodiversity and business was carried out by global market survey company IPSOS.

The TEEB project is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme and supported by the European Commission; the German Federal Environment Ministry; the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; UK Department for International Development; Norway's Ministry for Foreign Affairs; The Netherlands' Interministerial Program Biodiversity; and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

WHALE SHARK SPOTTED IN **AL BATEEN HARBOUR** IN ABU DHABI

PRESS RELEASE – ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - ABU DHABI (EAD)
June 9, 2009

A whale shark was spotted on June 6, 2010, by the marine scientists of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) inside Al Bateen Harbour in Abu Dhabi. The 5-meter whale shark had entered the harbour while it was roaming in the coastal waters of Abu Dhabi for food.

According to Thabit Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Biodiversity Management Sector, Abu Dhabi's coastal waters are known to be a hosting habitat for the whale sharks, because it is rich in important microscopic plants and animals (scientifically known as phytoplanktons and zooplanktiontons) that form the main food source for this giant harmless fish.

He said "Whale sharks occurring in the coastal areas of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the Arabian Gulf in general are mainly juveniles suggesting this area may be an important range as a nursery ground for these gentle giants".

Thabit Al Abdessalaam noted that it was worth knowing that this is the second time during this year to record this fish in Abu Dhabi Island. "Its appearance in the late winter and spring season may indicate a change in its behavior due to change in the temperature regimes of the water", he said.

FACTS ABOUT WHALE SHARKS:

- The whale shark is the largest fish in the sea, reaching lengths of more than 12 meters and weights of more than 20 tonnes.
- This distinctively-marked fish is the only member of its genus Rhincodon and its family, Rhincodontidae that can live up to 70 years.
- Preferring warm waters, whale sharks populate all tropical seas. The whale shark is a filter feeder which consumes plankton which they scoop up in their gaping mouths while swimming close to the water's surface.
- They are currently listed as a vulnerable species according to IUCN; however, they continue to be hunted in parts of some Asian countries.
- As a filter feeder it has a capacious mouth which can be up to 1.5 metres wide and can contain between 300 and 350 rows of tiny teeth. The body is mostly grey with a white belly; three prominent ridges run along each side of the animal and the skin is marked with a "checkerboard" of pale yellow spots and stripes. These spots are unique to each individual and are useful for counting populations. Its skin can be up to 10 centimeters.
- This species, despite its size, does not pose significant danger to humans.
- The female shark can carry more than 300 pups. The eggs remain in the body and the females give birth to live young which are 40 to 60 centimeters long. It is believed that they reach sexual maturity at around 30 years and the life span is an estimated 70 - 100 years.

THOUSANDS OF JUVENILE FISH RELEASED TO SUSTAIN ABU DHABI'S FISHERIES

PRESS RELEASE – EAD
June 27, 2010

For the first time, the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) and the International Fish Farming Holding Company P.J.S.C. (ASMAK), a leading aquaculture company in the UAE, have released 50,000 fingerlings and juveniles of two local fish species: Hamour (Orange Spotted Grouper) and Sobaity.

The fish were released as part of EAD's Fish Stock Enhancement Programme, which aims to sustain the Emirate of Abu Dhabi's fisheries. The fish were released in coordination with the Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) off the northern coast of Saadiyat Island.

Weighing between 1.2-2.0 grams, the fish were released in the early morning hours by Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Biodiversity Management Sector; Mohammed Al Muhairi, ASMAK's Vice Chairman; Mohammed Yasin, ASMAK's Director General and Nasser Al Shaiba, TDIC's Environmental Director.

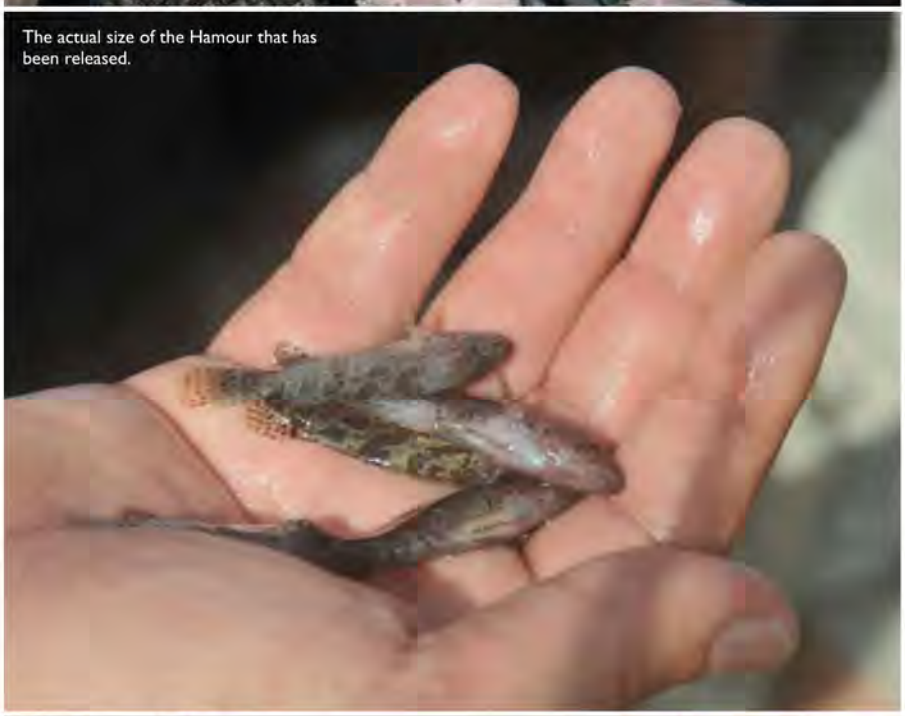
"We have developed fisheries management plans, issued regulations to control the fishing effort and continue to regulate the conditions under which commercial fishing may occur. Despite these measures, some of our fisheries are still being overfished and that is why this release was necessary," said Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Biodiversity Management Sector.

"We are working to rebuild spawning stock biomass by augmenting the natural supply of juveniles, mitigating losses due to anthropogenic effects, supplementing fisheries that may be under pressure from fishing and improving the production from already sustainable fisheries," he added.

Al Abdessalaam said that stock enhancement programmes such as this one offer possible remediation for non-fishery related impacts on fisheries, such as ecological disruption, the pressures of development on existing fishery habitats and fishing locations.

Other countries around the world have adopted similar marine stock enhancement programs such as Australia, China, Denmark, France, Iceland, Korea, Norway, Spain, Thailand, UK, USA, Japan, Iran, Canada and many island nations of Oceania.

Release location of fingerlings


The actual size of the Hamour that has been released.


Before release, the fingerlings were preserved in water tanks at a temperature of 21°C.

هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI

www.ead.ae

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI LAUNCHES PIONEERING ONLINE COASTAL ATLAS

PRESS RELEASE – EAD
Abu Dhabi, June 15, 2010

- An interactive guide with an innovative online component to Abu Dhabi's coastline and waters will support policy-making and coastal development planning, as well as educate people about the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity
- The result of two years' work, the Atlas is the first comprehensive resource of its kind in the Gulf region and one of the most technologically-advanced in the world
- The Atlas is a dynamic application which will be regularly updated ensuring current information is readily available to all
- The Atlas has already won the international Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has today launched its Coastal Resources Atlas and Vulnerability Index ('Coastal Atlas'), a pioneering new resource detailing the Emirate of Abu Dhabi's coastline and waters. The Coastal Atlas is designed to aid local policy-making and coastal development planning, as well as inform and educate people interested in the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity.

The Coastal Atlas, which is available to view online at **coastalatlas.ead.ae/English**, has been primarily designed as a tool to aid policy makers and development planners understand more about the Emirate's marine environment, helping them to understand the potential impact of new policies, legislation and development decisions. The Atlas details environmental sensitivities, such as different habitats, its local biodiversity and their vulnerabilities, according to CMRECS (Coastal and Marine Resources and Ecosystem Classification System) criteria, which is internationally-recognised and considered global best-practice.

As well as technical data, the Coastal Atlas also contains information about Abu Dhabi's coastal and marine environment that members of the public will find of interest, for example locations of Marine Protected Areas. Using easy-to-use software and visually-attractive design, viewers can navigate the coastline and waters from the comfort of their armchairs. For example, people will be able to learn where the Emirate's population of dugongs can be found, what kind of fish live in the local waters and the impact of climate change on rising sea levels in the Arabian Gulf. Most of the data is 'open access' online, however a second tier of the Coastal Atlas is a GIS-based extension that contains commercial or sensitive information. For example, oil rig locations can only be accessed by authorised parties granted access by EAD.

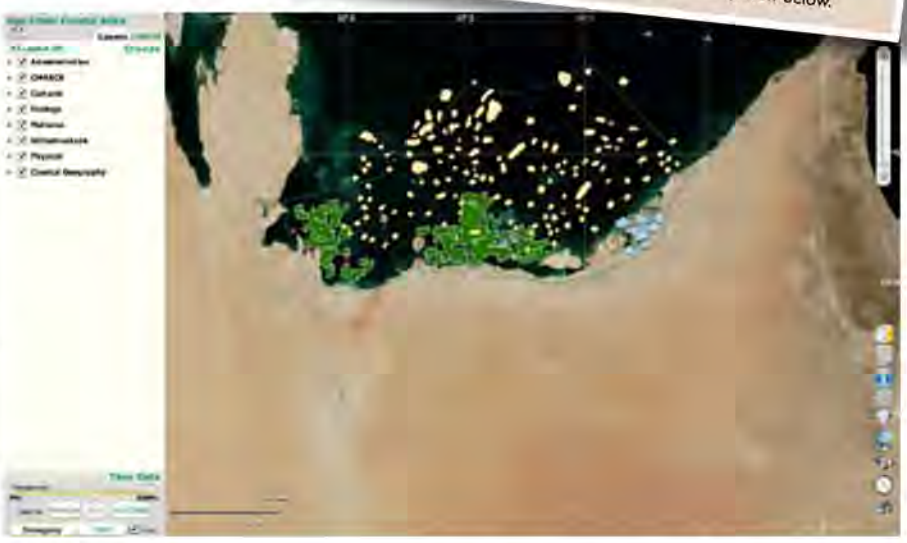
EAD has designed this tool to be used for environmental impact assessment by planners and developers. For example, a developer planning to dredge along the coastline will be able to map out sensitive areas containing high level of sedimentation and overlay these areas with ecological data. This mapping facility will enable developers to have access to data that will inform their decision-making.

An oil spill modelling application outlines potential scenarios in the event of an oil spill in the Arabian Gulf, showing how the oil could spread out from various locations, wind and wave patterns which could influence its spread and impact on ecology. The software has also been designed to be used as a central near-real-time resource point in the event of a real oil spill, showing the tracking of the oil's movements and helping to ensure critical information is exchanged transparently and smoothly between the organizations involved in the oil spill's management.

The Coastal Atlas has already been recognized with a global best practice award – the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010.

Speaking at today's launch, H.E Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary General of EAD, said: "In Abu Dhabi, we are blessed with an abundance of natural coastline and a rich marine environment which is being increasingly recognized, such as that of Bu Tinah Island. We believe that people interested in biodiversity will enjoy learning more about our local marine habitats and wildlife through this easy-to-use online tool. At EAD, we believe that interest leads to knowledge, and that knowledge leads to action. We realize that the more people know about Abu Dhabi's unique environment, the more they will appreciate it and want to protect it."

In addition, Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Biodiversity Management Sector, said: "The Coastal Atlas is the first resource of its kind in the region, and one of the most technologically-advanced in the world today. It will function as a live database, and we are actively asking our partners to help contribute on an ongoing basis, helping to ensure that information about the marine environment is readily accessible to those who need it and that environmental considerations are prioritized."



EAD's Introduction to the Coastal Atlas website and the map view below.

The Coastal Atlas is an expanded and updated version of the Coastal Resources Atlas issued in 2000, a hard copy edition developed by EAD, which focused on potential coastal-based scenarios in the event of an oil-spill in the Arabian Gulf.

FAQ

COASTAL RESOURCES ATLAS AND VULNERABILITY INDEX (COASTAL ATLAS)

1. What is this Coastal Resources Atlas and Vulnerability Index?
The Coastal Atlas is an interactive online tool that will support local policy-making and coastline development planning, as well as educate users about the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity.

The Coastal Atlas is an expanded, improved and updated version of a hard copy edition of the Coastal Resources Atlas issued by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) in the year 2000.

2. Who is this targeted at?
There are two tiers of information – one is open access via the Web, e.g. private companies and developers such as Al Dar or Sorouh, and the other is aimed at policy-makers such as UPC or Abu Dhabi Municipality, and organizations with commercial or military interest in Abu Dhabi's waters such as CNIA.

3. What made EAD create such an initiative?
EAD is proud that this Atlas is the first-of-its-kind in the Gulf region.

The availability of relevant information and expert advice is necessary to help improve management of coastal areas. To date, coastal resource information has been housed in a variety of data warehouses; some digital and some available in hardcopy form only. Combining these sources around a single access point would streamline coastal planning and management processes.

EAD has developed the Coastal Atlas in response to a need for easily accessible information that can be used by all stakeholders with an interest or a stake in Coastal and Marine Resources Planning and Development.

4. What are the benefits of using such a tool?
The benefits for all parties are significant. Easily available and real-time information about the coastline, its waters and its biodiversity, will allow for better informed decisions to be taken, and for environmental considerations to be prioritized.

In addition, requests for existing information from Government agencies will be greatly reduced with associated cost savings.

Other stakeholders as well as general users will have a greater sense of ownership and stewardship of natural resources, and will be better informed when resource-use decisions are being made.

The Coastal Atlas is also a great educational tool, and can be accessed for research purposes by university students.

5. How can users access the Coastal Atlas?
Most of the data is 'open access' and available on the World Wide Web. However, commercially or security sensitive information, for example concerning oil rig locations, will only be accessible by individuals and organizations that have been granted access by EAD.

6. How long did it take to develop this project?
It took two years to develop this project from idea conception to going live.

7. Who is responsible for updating the information?
A dedicated team at EAD will ensure that all information entered is real time and valid. EAD welcomes data from partners and other interested parties (e.g. diving groups, environmental organizations) and will be quality-controlling these submissions before adding them to the Coastal Atlas.

8. How will the Coastal Atlas help protect us from the effects of an off-shore oil-spill?
The Coastal Atlas will help management and policymakers be better prepared, by mapping out all possible scenarios in helping to protect our coastlines and marine life.

An oil spill modelling application outlines potential scenarios in the event of an oil spill in the Arabian Gulf, showing how the oil could spread out from various locations, wind and wave patterns which could influence its spread and impact on ecology. The software has also been designed to be used as the central real-time resource point in the event of a real oil spill, showing the tracking of the oil's movements and helping to ensure critical information is exchanged transparently and smoothly between the organizations involved in the oil spill's management.

9. How has the Coastal Atlas been received so far?
From an international perspective, the Coastal Atlas has already been recognized with a global best practice award – the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010. The award will be presented to EAD representatives at the ESRI 2010 International User Conference in San Diego, California in July 2010.

From the local front, our key partners have all welcomed this initiative. We're confident that the Coastal Atlas will become a primary resource for them.

10. What does Abu Dhabi's coastal and marine environment look like today?
The Emirate of Abu Dhabi's coastal and marine environment is rich and diverse. However, there are ongoing challenges to resources' protection through coastal development, human settlements, pollution, and overfishing, and at the broader scale through pollution and climate change. Pressure on these ecosystems and the environment in general will continue to grow as development increases. However, tools such as the Coastal Atlas allow for more informed decision-making and better management, and so can help reduce the threat and protect these valuable ecosystems for present and future generations.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI (EAD)

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is a governmental agency that was established in 1996. We are committed to protecting and managing biodiversity, providing a clean environment and promoting Sustainable Development in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. We provide a direction for Government, business and the community to build environmental considerations into the way they plan and live without compromising Abu Dhabi development. Since 2008, EAD has been awarded ISO 9001 for Quality; ISO 14001 for Environment and ISO 18001 for Health and Safety.

هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency Abu Dhabi

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PROJECT AWARE FOUNDATION

SCUBA DIVERS TACKLE **MARINE DEBRIS ISSUES** WORLDWIDE

DIVERS PROTECT UNDERWATER ENVIRONMENTS DURING PROJECT AWARE'S IN

It's hard to picture six million tonnes of debris entering the ocean in one year. In fact, that's what happens each and every year – harming wildlife and underwater environments. But on International Cleanup Day, 25 September, Project AWARE Foundation will be joined by passionate underwater volunteers in 100 countries, using their unique skills to remove harmful marine debris and collect data necessary for change.

Mark your calendar to participate. Register an underwater cleanup event, volunteer for a cleanup near you or donate to Project AWARE Foundation and support the efforts of volunteer dive teams across the globe at www.projectaware.org.

Last year, more than 30,000 AWARE Divers and volunteers from 92 countries documented and removed harmful litter surfacing with more than 91,000 plastic bottles and nearly 79,000 plastic bags. In total, the weight of all debris collected equaled the weight of 44 orca whales or 222 small cars.

The pinnacle cleanup event of the year, International Cleanup Day, is held each September in partnership with the Ocean Conservancy. But underwater cleanup efforts don't just end in September. Project AWARE and dedicated dive volunteers tackle the devastating impacts of marine debris year round.

"Removing and documenting the debris found underwater, is the first step to resolving the marine debris crisis and dedicated dive volunteers play a key role in providing a more complete understanding of these issues," states Director, Project AWARE Foundation, Jenny Miller Garmendia.

All underwater cleanup data contributes to the Global Marine Debris Index prepared by the Ocean Conservancy and is also recognized in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report "Marine Litter: A Global Challenge". The Global Marine Debris Index is the world's only state-by-state, country-by-country breakdown of what's littering our oceans and waterways. These reports help identify the sources and possible solutions to marine debris worldwide.

"Understanding where the debris comes from and how it ends up in the ocean is essential to addressing pollution at the source. Combined with behavior change, improved packaging and waste management, it's possible to begin to reverse these trends," adds Miller Garmendia. "Collectively we're building a sustainable future and supporting the prevention of marine debris in the long-term."

PROJECT AWARE®

www.projectaware.org

Take action on International Cleanup Day this 25 September at **www.projectaware.org**.

Project AWARE Foundation, a registered non-profit organisation, works in partnership with divers to conserve underwater environments through education, advocacy and action. To get involved in environmental activities and make a lasting difference visit www.projectaware.org.

In 2009 Project AWARE released the International Cleanup Day Report 2009 (available in 7 languages). The 20 page report details Project AWARE's Marine Debris Campaign and recognizes the ongoing efforts of divers and volunteers across the globe.

http://www.projectaware.org/assets/209_cleanupreportmarch2010.pdf

Photo by Marlies Lang – Egypt

Take the plunge for International Cleanup Day

Photo courtesy of Greenpeace/Care Marine Photobank

Help make clean water a reality

25th September 2010

Register your cleanup event, collect data and support conservation.

PROJECT AWARE®

www.projectaware.org

NEW IN **DIVE GEAR**

GO PINK!

Gone are the days of a single coloured (black), heavy dive kit. Aqualung has introduced lightweight, hi-tec, ladies gear in pink and grey. Get the look and dive with ease in this stylish gear:

AQUALUNG PEARL i3 BCD

The Pearl i3 is the best ladies BCD ever built by Aqua Lung. Combining back inflation and sleeker front inflation, this BCD gives the best fit combined with the best in-water balance. You can choose between the option of the standard inflation system, or Aqua Lung's revolutionary i3 inflation technology. Designed to carry the least amount of weight on your shoulders, with soft new inside materials, this is the top of the range in comfort.

- Choice of the i3 inflator system or the standard hose inflator system.
- Multiple dump features allow upper and lower dumps to activate simultaneously ensuring balanced inflation and deflation.
- Flat e-valves reduce drag and keep the BCD streamlined
- The one-way valves incorporated into the flat e-valves prevent water from back flushing into the BCD.
- Available in black/charcoal and pink/charcoal.

AQUALUNG MICRON REGULATOR

Aqua Lung has once again raised the bar on regulator design with the release of Mikron – the smallest and lightest regulator on the market today. Weighing in at just 26oz (din) and 31oz (yoke), the lady divers and the travelling diver will benefit tremendously. Even more amazing is that performance is not sacrificed by the extreme compactness of the regulator. Its balanced first and second stages produce exceptional breathing performance.

- Compact dimensions and low weight blend comfort with a unique diving experience.
- A new, braided hose, weighing less than 5oz, provides flexibility, comfort and excellent packability.
- The Mikron is available in two colours including the new pink vanilla that matches the new Pearl i3 BCD.

SLINGSHOT FINS

Aqua Lung is excited to offer Slingshot – a revolutionary fin that will take the dive world by storm. The Slingshot™ will make diving more comfortable, efficient and fun. Its innovations include Power Bands, Gear Shift and Mid-foot Flex Joint that all add up to provide a wonderful diving experience.

To complete the look:

- Add the pink or black Micromask – low profile for extra visability.
- Pink vanilla rash vest.

GLOBAL DIVE TRAVELLER

Does your dive adventure take you to the far corners of the earth? Make the journey easier with the travel range from Aqualung. Zuma is here!

Here's the BCD that you have been waiting for. The fun, travel-friendly ZUMA will find favour with those divers who are tired of paying excess

baggage fees. This ultra-light, weight-integrated, back inflation BCD has everything you need, yet lacks weight and bulk. By lightweight, we aren't joking as the BCD weighs less than 2kg (4.4lbs), with the airway and weight pockets included!

- Extremely lightweight
- Size ML/LG weighs less than 2kg (4.4lbs)
- Great packability – flat or rolled

Team this up with:

- The Micron lightweight reg, in matching green and black
- Black Slingshot fins
- The black micromask
- The Moby Light dive bag from Cressi

BEST IN CLASS – PRO QD i3

The Pro QD is the first BCD that incorporates i3 technology. For years, the Pro QD has been an extremely popular BCD for novices and experts alike. Now, with the addition of i3 technology and fresh, new cosmetics, its popularity is sure to soar.

- Integrated i3 technology for safer and easier control of inflation and deflation.
- One upper and one lower Flat E-Valve keeps the BCD streamlined while offering effective and responsive air dumping.
- One-way valves prevent water from back flushing into the BCD, greatly reducing captured water.

THE REGULATOR

The Legend ACD™ regulator series incorporates a proprietary over-balanced diaphragm first stage design coupled with a high performance balanced second stage. The over-balanced first stage achieves unprecedented performance by increasing your air supply the deeper you go. The balanced adjustable second stage reduces breathing resistance to near zero with a lightweight balanced valve seat designed to respond instantaneously to the slightest inhalation. Breathing at 30m should always feel this easy! The Legend ACD regulator series is the best performing regulator Aqua Lung has ever offered. Legendary performance from Aqua Lung: a tradition for 60 years.

- Compatible with EAN 40 right out of the box
- Din adapter Option

Complete the kit:

- Black and red Slingshot fins
- Black and red Infinity mask
- Diablo Professional dive knife
- Traveller 1800 dive bag and Traveller 100 backpack

Al Boom Diving is the distributor for Aqualung and Cressi in the UAE. Email us on Abdiving@emirates.net.ae or visit our website: www.alboomdiving.com for more info.

KIT **REVIEW**

THE AQUALUNG RANGE ON TEST

By Steve Wood

I am a difficult diver to please and I often dismiss some of the 'innovations' we see from equipment manufacturers as simply gimmicks to lure unsuspecting divers into parting with their hard earned wages. So when Al Boom Diving asked me to test some of the new Aqualung gear I admit that I had a hint of pessimism. Surely BCDs and Fins cannot be improved upon?

PRO QD i3 BCD

Aqualung claim this BCD is the best in its class. And it's hard to dispute that. The designers have actually thought about what we divers need in a jacket. Its i3 technology means your inflate/deflate is a lever on the left side of the jacket below the main pocket, which you can use in any position, even head down. The air escapes through upper & lower dump valves that are flat against the jacket, which is a really sensible idea because they don't stick out asking to be smashed against the side of a trailer or the numerous hard surfaces we are faced with. One way valves prevent water from back flushing into the jacket which greatly reduces the amount of water swilling around the jacket. And it comes with integrated weight pouches with a very secure clip-in system.

It's well built and feels like a substantial unit with its high density plastic moulding and super strength weave. Once on, it sits perfectly and has plenty of adjustment so you can get that super snug fit. The shoulder straps have swivel clips which mean the jacket is able to fit around you. With no Low Pressure hose to get in the way, the jacket feels tidy. The inflator hose routes under the arm and clips into the inflator unit.

On the surface the jacket provides lots of buoyancy. Instructors will like the armchair position it puts you into and the amount of lift even when carrying extra weight for your students!

Under water the jacket feels great. Once you familiarise yourself with the position of the inflator lever it's simple to use. And with large pockets on both sides of the jacket, there is lots of room for those essential dive items such as torches and DSMB's.

So what's not to like? Well not much but a few small comments for any future redesign. Trim weight pouches on the back would be a useful addition, and for the instructor in me I wanted more D-rings!

Overall a great jacket and both pleasure divers and instructors will love using the Pro QD I3.

LEGEND LX ACD™ REGULATOR

Many things are classed as legendary but few genuinely live up to the title. In the case of this regulator, Aqualung has taken a truly great reg and made it even better! Long time divers have always known the Legend range is the workhorse of regulators. Its not flashy, there are no gimmicks, it just does its job and it does it brilliantly. To get technical for a moment, the best thing about these regs is the "over-balanced diaphragm first stage design coupled with a high performance balanced second stage".

But what does that actually mean? Simply put, the first stage works by increasing your air supply the deeper you go and the adjustable

second stage reduces breathing resistance to near zero so even at 30 metres you can breathe easily! As I said it does its job brilliantly.
They look good, are lightweight but still feel substantial; EAN 40% compatible straight out of the box, cold water rated and have a DIN adapter option. In my opinion you won't get a better set of regs at such a price.

SLINGSHOT FINS

Now these look strange! Aqualung appears to have taken a set of fins, sliced off the ends and reattached them with some kind of rubber spring! I had spent many months maligning a dive buddy for purchasing a pair, no matter how much he told me they are the Ferrari of fins. A fin is a fin surely? And then I went in the water with them.

These things are like rockets on the end of your legs! The rubber spring in effect increases the power you put into each kick by causing a flick of the fins and driving you forward. So less effort but more speed. In current they really come into their own, allowing you to hold in place simply by using small flutter kicks or move forward with powerful driving fin kicks.

I found I could still do frog kicks and manoeuvre around easily both under water and at the surface. Overall a great new fin and I am hoping to have a pair in my dive bag very soon.

Al Boom Diving has all of the equipment I tested, along with the full Aqualung range of masks, dive bags and accessories to get you fully kitted up and ready to get out on the boat.

Steve Wood is an Independent Instructor working alongside Al Boom Diving in Dubai.
www.scubasteve.ae

AL BOOM DIVING CONGRATULATES **NEW COURSE DIRECTOR**

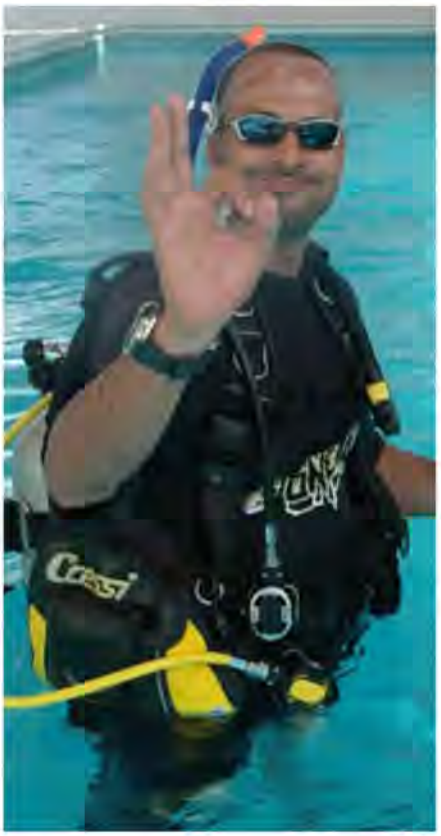
Al Boom Diving would like to congratulate Mohamed Helmy – a newly certified PADI Course Director!

Success comes from striving to be the best and for 39 PADI members, this led them to the PADI Course Director Training Course conducted from 19 - 29 July 2009 at Sun Village Resort in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. Training with PADI Staff, these professionals joined the elite group of PADI Course Directors and attained the highest and most respected professional rating in recreational scuba diving.

Mo hopes to encourage more Arabic speakers to take the challenge and become a PADI Pro. His first IDC will run in October this year from the 11th – 21st October and will include the AI, EFRI, and OWSI programs in Arabic.

Those interested to take the challenge with Mo can contact him on helmy@alboomdiving.ae or Abdiving@emirates.net.ae.

Congrats on this prestigious achievement Mo!



COMPLETE YOUR **OPEN WATER COURSE** ON THE DHOW

Complete your PADI Open Water course with a social dive day out in the Musandam with your fellow students and Al Boom Diving. Al Boom Diving is offering the PADI Open Water course and Advanced Open Water Course, with the last dives from the dhow as a course option. This option is great for new divers who want to enjoy the dhow day trip with fellow students, make new dive buddies and explore the Musandam.

A dhow trip for Open Water dive 3&4 will be held monthly, and divers that are interested in the option can chat to our call centre to book their place. The course upgrade to include the dhow option is just an additional Dhs 250.

Advanced students can complete their last two dives – deep dive and boat dive from the dhow, for the same upgrade price.

AOW students have the additional option of completing their Fish ID dive in the Dubai Aquarium – course price Dhs 2,125 instead of the normal Dhs 1,980 which is a great deal!

Chat to our friendly call centre ladies to discuss your course options today on 04 342 2993 or email abdiving@emirates.net.ae.

Special deals on masks, snorkels and fins from top brands Aqualung and Cressi for Al Boom Open Water students are available. Go pink with the ladies range from Aqualung, or go 'back to black' with the stylish gear in store now. For more information visit www.alboomdiving.com or join the Facebook group "Al Boom Dive Club".

MUSANDAM DIVE GETAWAY

Need a weekend away that is affordable and easy? Take a break with a dive and stay weekend in the Musandam from Al Boom Diving.

The weekend can be tailor made to your schedule, but here is a sample to give you an idea:

THURSDAY: Drive over to the Golden Tulip Resort in Dibba any Thursday evening in time for dinner.

FRIDAY: After breakfast, head to the Dibba Port to join Mo and the entertaining dhow crew for the Friday dhow day trip doing two dives in the Musandam, with Arabic buffet lunch served between dives. Return to the hotel for a swim in the pool and sundowners before dinner. (BBQ dinner option is also available).

SATURDAY: After breakfast on Saturday, walk down to the waters' edge to catch the speedboat for two relaxed dives – and a gourmet sub sandwich lunch on board. Return to the hotel by 3pm at the end of a great weekend!

Dhs 1,275 per person, including:

- Two nights' accommodation bed and breakfast (2 pax sharing)
- Friday dhow trip for 2 pax, with buffet lunch, T&W, tea, coffee, water and softdrinks
- Two dives by speedboat, for 2 pax, T&W, and a gourmet sub sandwich

Dhs 675 per person, including:

- One night accommodation bed and breakfast (2 pax sharing)
- Two dives by speedboat on Friday, for 2 pax, T&W, and a gourmet sub sandwich

Rates may vary on public holidays, ask our call centre for your tailor made Musandam getaway, email: abdiving@emirates.net.ae or call 04 342 2993.

REPTON SCHOOL DHOW TRIP

Students from Repton School recently completed their Open Water and Advanced Open Water courses, enjoying two dives from the dhow in the Musandam. Parents and teachers joined the students for a family day out as 15 new divers were certified.

"This is the ideal setting for a family day out, and to show the students and parents that diving is a great family activity" said Francis Uy, Course Director at Al Boom Diving.

"The parents and teachers were introduced to a new option for a family day out" said Ryan Todd, PADI MI at Al Boom Diving. "Perhaps the kids will persuade their parents to take up diving too!"

Before the dives, the dive crew gave a small talk on diving and the environment to add to the students' awareness of the marine environment. EDA also sponsored gift bags for the students, including UAE fish identification charts, posters and stickers, which were very popular with the students.

OPEN WATER DIVERS

The Open Water Diver students completed two dives at the shallow, calm reef sites, Ras Alfie and The Caves. "The Musandam offers great dive spots, there is something for everyone" commented Francis.

ADVANCED OPEN WATER DIVERS

The Advanced Open Water Diver students completed their Deep and Boat dives on the day, with one group having the luck of spotting a whale shark! The Advanced Open Water students had previously done their Underwater Navigation and Peak Performance Buoyancy dives at the Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa, and their Fish ID dive in the Dubai Aquarium.

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

"To further encourage the students to keep diving, we helped the school to setup an Underwater Photography Club," said Ryan. "The students have all completed their Digital Underwater Photo Level 1 Specialty so far, with plans for more underwater photography activities.

A big congrats from the Al Boom Dive Crew to the Repton students on completing their courses, and continuing their adventure".
www.alboomdiving.com

MY ADVANCED COURSE


A fellow student diver

After finishing my PADI Open Water course earlier this year, my school, Repton Dubai, gave some of us the opportunity to continue diving. So, as part of my PADI Advanced Open Water, I was going to do a deep dive and a boat dive in Musandam. I would also have a fish identification dive in the Dubai Mall Aquarium and underwater navigation and peak performance buoyancy in another dive in Jebel Ali.

We started our day early from school. There were two buses with three teachers and around ten students. It was still quite early in the day when we set off. The majority of people on the boat were from Repton, but there were some parents too.

After our pre-dive talk by the Al Boom Diving crew, we were told to get comfortable. A few of us went to the top of the dhow where we relaxed for a while. Soon, we had to get changed and get all our equipment ready for our dives. There were only four people doing the Advanced course and we had two instructors. We had to get on the small motorboat that had been towed along the whole way to go to a different dive site. We quickly assembled our gear and passed it onto the boat. Meanwhile, the Open Water guys were kitting up too.

We were transported around the cliff so the dhow was out of view. The water here was clearly much deeper. We got our BCDs on and went under. Both Connor and I had some trouble equalizing, but we managed. We sat at the bottom, about 16m below the surface, looking around. The water was quite clear and looking around, I felt tiny in the massive ocean. The surface seemed so far away. This was the deepest I had ever been.

When we were 21m below, everything started losing colour. After our skills, we started to follow the seabed back up. We saw eels, groupers and feather stars amongst many other fish. We had soon finished and swam around with the others for a good while, around coral, doing backflips and swimming upside down. The surface still seemed far away, just a bright glow, from down here. Oliver and Francis pulled out two folded-up tubes that I had never seen before. Using their alternate air supplies, they inflated them and let them shoot up to the surface. These showed the boat where to pick us up from. Meanwhile, we were waiting, stationary underwater, for our safety stop.

Back on the dhow, we had a rest. We all had a great time, diving off the top, pouring cold water and Pepsi on each other or just chilling out. After, we had to change our tanks and get ready because the advanced group was off again. This time, we had very few skills and a lot of free time to swim around and do whatever we wanted. But all too soon, we had to return to the dhow again, for the last time. We had lunch and more drinks before finally leaving back to the shore. We filled in our dive logs on the way back then simply relaxed the rest of the way. It was a long day, but it was great.

The next Thursday, the four of us doing our Advanced met once again, but instead of going to the sea, we met each other in the Dubai Mall. We were going to go into the Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo for our Fish ID dive. After a video and our usual pre-dive talk by Ryan, we had to get kitted up. He assured us that we wouldn't be eaten by sharks! Soon, Ryan was leading me and my buddy down into the aquarium with hundreds of fish and lots of sharks.

The dive was amazing. We had to follow a set path, but we were able to see hundreds of different species of fish, including rays, eels and sharks. We saw the people outside the aquarium and the ones in the tunnel. Our teachers took photos of us swimming with the sharks. I expected to be more frightened with so many predators so close to me, but I was surprisingly calm. In what seemed like just a few minutes time, Ryan told us to ascend. I thought there must have been something wrong as we had been in the water for only around 10 minutes. But once we were up, he told us that it had been more than half an hour and that we had to step out.

My entire Advanced diving experience was phenomenal and left me with memories of the best dives I've ever done. Thanks to the Al Boom team and my teachers, I'm now waiting for my new license!

Prajwal Bhaskar
Student (15 years)
Repton Dubai

ALMADION DIVERS: IMPETUS OF A PERSONALIZED DIVE TRAINING CENTER IN THE FACEBOOK AGE

FEATURE **MARK VINCENT ISRAEL, PADI SCUBA INSTRUCTOR**

Surprisingly, the economic downtrend in 2009 brought about the dawn of our new beginning. It came straight from the ground and sprouted when it seems things were falling apart.

The vision to build a new Dive Center here in the UAE has always been our dream. For me, it was a passion I shared with my Divemaster students who soon became my good friends. A Greek construction tiles tycoon was supposed to be the big brother who could help me plant the first seed of this vision. We both made all preliminary mental explorations of future possibilities and have it laid forward and examined.

But fate is not without a good sense of humour. When all the right tools were set in place, the telescope to see far, the microscope to look closely, and the compass to know where to go, everything then fell apart. My partner became bankrupt. He unfortunately became a statistic of crashing companies in 2009. The plan to build our dive center in the UAE went disarray. I then left the country like a lot of us did last year, when the green pastures here dried up.

In this moment of despair, when all hope was gone, another good friend and former Divemaster student, Dirk Benedix, picked up the shredded dreams I left scattered on the floor. With a similar dream on his mind, of running his own dive center, he slowly brought the pieces together and examined the cohesive structure of the failed vision. In a bold attempt, he presented the crumpled pieces to another diving enthusiast and business partner Andy Boessow, the CEO of ALMADION International LLC.

Both Dirk and Andy agreed that the market analysis and potential for diving education and first experience divers in the UAE was evident. Realizing that this is one of the few places where diving is not as seasonal as compared to other destinations in the world because the bulk of students are expats, not only tourists. They also agreed that such a vision is potent and achievable.

The possibility of having a new Dive Center in Dubai once again became a lucid dream.

All legal requirements were prepared by Andy and Dirk while I was still outside of the country. We named the Center ALMADION Divers in reference to a Trojan King known to be benevolent to his people. It is also to set the bar that when you dive with us, you are diving with friends.

After legalizing the trade license, visa and registration with the esteemed Emirates Diving Association, I flew over to Dubai in May 2010 with renewed hope. I was ready to take up the cudgels of this new challenge.

We constructed a business office, a dive shop and classroom in Umm Ramool along Marrakech Road across the Al Futtaim Toyota Service and Parts Center, hosted as part of ALMADION International LLC's Dubai main location. Our students will have the option to carry out their diving theory sessions over there and be introduced to the various parts of diving gear and further dive equipment needed to feel comfortable and safe while diving in any aquatic environment in the world.

Our webpage **www.almadiondivers.com** was created to make our virtual existence formal. We created a Fan Page on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/pages/ALMADION-Divers/348588129067?ref=ts) to reach out to former students, friends and diving enthusiasts here in the UAE and around the world. The potent and unconventional marketing tool for a product that is not off-the-shelf.

This relatively new tool helped spread our presence here in the UAE. Here we announced our dive promotions for courses and dive trips. Photos are also shared on our page to propagate the awesome experience we and our students had. Comments stream in from our satisfied "diver friends". By the way, an important point to mention, we refuse to call our "diver friends" customers/clients!

With the help of our online buddies referring students to us on Facebook, ALMADION Divers started to teach diving courses. It was mainly our virtual friends, the dive students and scuba instructors no longer in the UAE, who fed us students so we could run and operate.

Our intentions are not only to teach diving per se, but to teach divers how to behave underwater. As a former Climate Change Campaigner with WWF, my personal history in Environment Protection work somehow ingrained deep in me not only to share the beautiful creatures we see underwater, but also to impart how fragile they are. Accordingly, we should take part in protecting them.

Dirk, Andy and myself share a great passion for Oceanic awareness and protection campaigns. We support many organizations worldwide, highlighting and spreading out the stories of action, importance and awareness of our Oceans and the sea-life within. We all share the understanding and embrace the responsibility of helping to protect our one and only encompassing mother earth.

Part of the specific actions we conducted was to help gather data and release newly hatched hawksbill turtles in Jebel Ali. To see them find their way in the water is such an overwhelming experience. This profound encounter with these wonderful, not to mention cute creatures is so awe-inspiring. We hope to share this experience with our students as well in the future.

We are a small Dive Center. Since we are small, our scuba diver training facility can give you more time to interact with your trainers. After all, diving is a social activity. It is a way to meet people who experience and share with you that same moment in an unnatural environment. A bond only for those of us who have harnessed technology and are enabled to breathe underwater. There we are allowed to glimpse how awesome and wonderful the underwater world is without needing to surface to catch our breath.

Our training philosophy is to teach only in small groups so that the students have more time to interact with their Instructor. This way, we believe the students will learn the skills more easily. Those who are interested to dive but are not really comfortable in the water would perhaps appreciate this chosen path we have taken.

ALMADION Divers aims to target families wishing to learn to dive together as a bonding activity as well. Companies who plan to conduct group dynamics to improve corporate cohesiveness can also come to us for an underwater team building activity. This for sure is an effective and unique way of bringing people together.

Hopefully we may be able to share with you our journey in exploring and protecting the underwater world. Eagerly anticipating the chance to ask you underwater someday if you are okay, look you in the eye behind the mask, and see you reply to us that you had a blast. Then we know, without question, that you had given us the great opportunity to share with you the one thing we all love so dearly - being underwater.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI'S INTERACTIVE COASTAL RESOURCES ATLAS WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

PRESS RELEASE
Abu Dhabi, August 16, 2010

- EAD's interactive guide on Abu Dhabi's coastline and waters wins prestigious Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010
- EAD's Atlas is recognised with global best practice award in San Diego, USA, by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) emerged as first place winner among 300,000 worldwide organisations to be recognised with the Special Achievement in Geographic Information System (GIS) Award for Environment Management at the 30th Annual Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) International User Conference held in San Diego, California. EAD was awarded for its innovative use of ESRI's GIS technology in developing The Coastal Resources Atlas and Environment Vulnerability Index (CRA) for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The Atlas, launched in Abu Dhabi in June 2010, is the first comprehensive resource of-its-kind in the Gulf region and one of the most technologically-advanced in the world.

The Coastal Resources Atlas and the Environment Vulnerability Index was designed to aid local policy-making and coastal development planning, as well as to inform and educate people about the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity. The Atlas also serves as an information tool for a variety of important marine datasets from a network of data providers. It combines an ecosystem classification scheme and quantification of habitat vulnerability to a variety of stressors.

At the Awards ceremony in San Diego, California, EAD was selected out of more than 300,000 organisations in industries such as agriculture, cartography, climate change, defence and intelligence, economic development, education, government, health and human services, telecommunications and utilities. Mr. Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of Biodiversity Management Sector at EAD received the award on behalf of the organisation.

"We created the Special Achievement in GIS Award to recognize our users' extraordinary contributions to global society," says ESRI President Jack Dangermond. "Each year, I look forward to being part of this ceremony; it's a tradition that has gained great meaning and importance for professionals in the GIS industry."

"The Atlas, which is available to view online at **coastalatlas.ead.ae**, is based upon the ArcGIS's desktop and web-based applications. It combines an Internet-based information system and interactive map and expert GIS desktop applications for viewing and analyzing coastal and marine data. The database constitutes a computerized, assisted system for input, storage, retrieval, analysis, and display of interpreted geographic and statistical data. It details environmental sensitivities, such as different habitats, its local biodiversity and their vulnerabilities," said Thabit Al Abdessalaam, Director of Biodiversity Management Sector at EAD.

Bu Tinah from the Sky – Copyright Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamdan

EDA DRAGONS STRUCK AGAIN IN ABU DHABI!

EDA will again be looking for 20 avid paddlers for our EDA Dragon Boat team to participate in the 3rd Abu Dhabi Dragon Boat Festival as part of the Adrenaline Sports Live at the Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri in Abu Dhabi on the 8th and 9th of October 2010. We will be paddling in the mixed corporate category. Remember all EDA paddlers must be a current EDA member.

EDA has participated in previous Abu Dhabi Dragon Boat festivals and had a strong showing and a winning team spirit. Again, we are looking for another opportunity to compete in this thrilling water sport. Dragon boating is a team sport bringing together a wide community of paddlers/drummers and is an adrenaline pumping water sport using efficient teamwork, synchronicity, technique and strategy. Its benefits are many including team work, strength, stamina and enjoyment.

We will have team practices on the following dates (tentatively) depending on race organizer's confirmation. All participants must make the practices and be available for both the race dates. There will be a Dragon Boat Party inclusive of a casual BBQ at Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri for team members only; however, additional tickets can be purchased in advance at a cost of Dhs120 per person.

TEAM PRACTICE SCHEDULE:

- Friday 18th September 10am-12pm at the Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri in Abu Dhabi
- Friday 25th September 10am-12pm at the Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri in Abu Dhabi
- Friday 2nd October 10am-12pm at the Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri in Abu Dhabi

RACE DATES:
8th and 9th October 2010 (timings to be confirmed but usually goes from morning til late afternoon).

To be an avid EDA Dragon Boat Team Paddler, please contact Kathleen Russell at info@divemahara.com or call 050 8369530.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW PADI INSTRUCTORS FROM AL MAHARA DIVING CENTER

Successful completion of the PADI Instructor Examination in Muscat

On Behalf of Al Mahara Diving Center and the EDA Team, we would like to congratulate the IDC candidates who successfully passed the 2 day PADI Instructor Examination in May (held in Dubai) and July (held in Muscat). This is the pinnacle of dive professionals like the black belt of diving to achieve this level. PADI Course Directors and the PADI instructional team take on the task and responsibility provide all the professional training and guidance for the instructor candidates. Thank you to PADI Course Director, Paul Cunningham and Peter Mainka for a job well done to prepare all the instructor candidates to achieve the exceptional performance of the candidates during the IE and onwards as a professional PADI Instructor.

May 2010 PADI IE
Congratulations to Andre Cossette, Philippe Lecomte and David Bushnell. In addition, congratulations to avid underwater photographer Peter Mainka for qualifying as a PADI IDC Staff Instructor!

July 2010 PADI IE
Congratulations to Heather Gomer, Laura Campbell, Essam Al Zaabi, Peter Brett and Simon Long!

We wish you all the success as a PADI Instructor and look forward to seeing a growing diving community due to your efforts as a PADI pro.

BODY GLOVE NOW AVAILABLE IN DUBAI

Leading water sports brand makes its debut at Sun and Sand Sports

July 2010 – Dubai, UAE – Body Glove, the world-renowned water sports brand from the USA is now available in Dubai. The company has teamed up with retail giant Sun and Sand Sports LLC to launch the brand across the region.

Body Glove wetsuits, personal floatation devices, apparel, aquatics and accessories such as fins, masks and snorkels can now be purchased exclusively at selected Sun and Sand Sports locations including Deira City Centre, Dubai Festival City, Jumeirah Sports Market, Mirdif City Centre and Ibn Battuta.

"The cool, placid waters of the Arabian Sea, high temperatures all the year round and naturally clear water make this city a perfect water sports destination. The growing interest from residents evident on the packed beaches is what prompted us to set up shop in the UAE and who better to do it with than Sun and Sand Sports, the most recognized sports retailer in this region," said Hisham Hasan, Vice President, Tiki Style ME JLT, Official licensee of Body Glove for the GCC.

"Water sports enthusiasts and Dubai's discerning consumers looking for the ultimate in apparel and accessories no longer need to travel far to get their hands on Body Glove's signature surf-inspired gear, which has globally set new standards in design and durability. They can now enjoy the convenience of having it available down the road," added Avinash Advani, Hasan's partner in Tiki Style ME.

Plans are already afoot to add to the existing portfolio of products as early as September 2010 with the inclusion of inflatables, a very popular range of products.

Marvin Shaire, CEO of Gulf Marketing Group, added, "Body Glove is a name synonymous with high quality and cutting-edge design and is guaranteed to add strength to our growing aquatics division. We are equally excited and committed to the brand and look forward to a long and prosperous partnership."

To learn about Body Glove products and retailers go to www.bodyglove.com. For daily updates on athletes and events visit the Body Glove Blog at www.bodygloveartbox.blogspot.com.

ABOUT BODY GLOVE

Founded in 1953, Body Glove is a leading, worldwide water sports brand specializing in wetsuits, swimwear, clothing, footwear, accessories, and technology accessories. The company sponsors one of the most respected surf and wakeboard teams in the industry with such powerhouse names as pro surfers Dusty Payne, Gabe Kling, Mike Losness, Alex Gray and Holly Beck and wake boarders Rusty Malinoski, Harley Clifford, Shelby Kantar and Jeff McKee. Through Reef Check, SIMA's environmental fund, and the Surfrider Foundation, Body Glove works to preserve the purity of the waters it loves. Body Glove products are sold in the US by a network of independent retailers. Body Glove is also sold in approximately 50 countries internationally.

ABOUT SUN AND SAND SPORTS LLC

Founded in Dubai in 1979, Sun & Sand Sports LLC is the largest multi-gender Sports retailer and wholesaler in the Middle East with over 80 stores in 6 countries across the GCC. The chain has very strong representation via its retail stores in almost every major shopping mall in these countries.

For more information please contact Nandini Vohra at nandini@theguildpr.com or call +971 50 457 8233.

BOB HOLLIS

ONE OF THE DIVING PIONEERS AND INNOVATORS

More than 25 years ago, Bob Hollis and a partner started a company known as Oceanic, one of today's major manufacturers of scuba diving equipment. They made camera housings, strobes, strobe housings and various U/W photo accessories for a budding industry. The company known as Oceanic is aptly named: it is the result of one man's love of the sea. Bob Hollis was born in Orlando, California. His fascination with the ocean began when he was working in Standard Oil's engineering services division while earning a degree in mechanical engineering.

As did most of our diving pioneers, he became an avid hunter, collecting abalone and spearfishing. In 1956 he bought a two hose regulator and began scuba diving. At the same time he became friends with three underwater photographers. This was a brand new art and they made their own camera housings. Bob made a housing for his camera using Plexiglass. When the first electronic strobes came out in 1958, he made underwater housings for them as well.

In 1966, Bob and Ray Collins opened a sporting goods, surfing, diving and fishing store called the Anchor Shack in Hayward, CA. (There would eventually be three stores.) They also sold a mail order line of Anchor Shack U/W photo equipment. The products, all hand made, included a camera tray and ball joint arms, along with strobe and camera housings. One of the most successful products was an aluminum housing for Nikon and Canon cameras known as the Hydro 35, some are still in use today.

In 1972, Oceanic was founded with the Anchor Shack photo line as its product base. Two years later the company's building burned down. When it was being rebuilt in 1974 Bob bought out his partner and purchased machinery and tooling for a plastic housing that could be used for several products. Bob added products to the Oceanic line. There were lights of course, but in the beginning there were also more photo products: lenses, carrying cases, a lightmeter, camera and strobe housings, extension tubes and framers.

Then, in 1976, Oceanic bought Farallon. That added fins, masks, snorkels, diver propulsion vehicles, knives, BCs and gauges, to the product line. Bob always knew the future of diving would be in electronics and in 1989 introduced the first Oceanic dive computers. Since then Oceanic has become known for leading the market with it's line of dive computers. Bob Hollis has strived to serve the industry.

To recognize and commemorate the pioneers and innovators of our industry, Oceanic has developed the Pioneer Limited Edition dive watch. They have transformed their flagship product, the OC1, into a timeless masterpiece for collectors and divers alike. When you see the marketing materials used to promote this extremely unique product, you will see why Oceanic remains the leader of innovative computers and dive technology worldwide.

The OC1 LE is constructed of titanium and finished with a special black matte coating. The OC1 LE is supplied with a matching titanium bracelet as well as a standard band for diving. The lens of the OC1 LE has a diamond coating to prevent scratches and abrasions. In keeping with the Pioneer theme, a copy of Bret Gilliam's "Diving Pioneers and Innovators" coffee table book, personally autographed by Bob Hollis, accompanies the dive watch. The watch itself is elegantly packaged in a finished wooden box, fashionably designed to reflect the importance of the product itself, and can also be used to store the OC1 LE when not in use.

Oceanic is producing only one thousand of the OC1 LE Dive Watches and it is now available in the UAE.

PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT
Abu Dhabi Shop locatedâ at Al Meena
Tel: 02 673 5955/02 666 5226
Dubai Shop located at Deep Blue Sea,
International City, Dubai
Tel: 04 430 8246/050 551 5006
Oceanic Authorized Distributor in the UAE

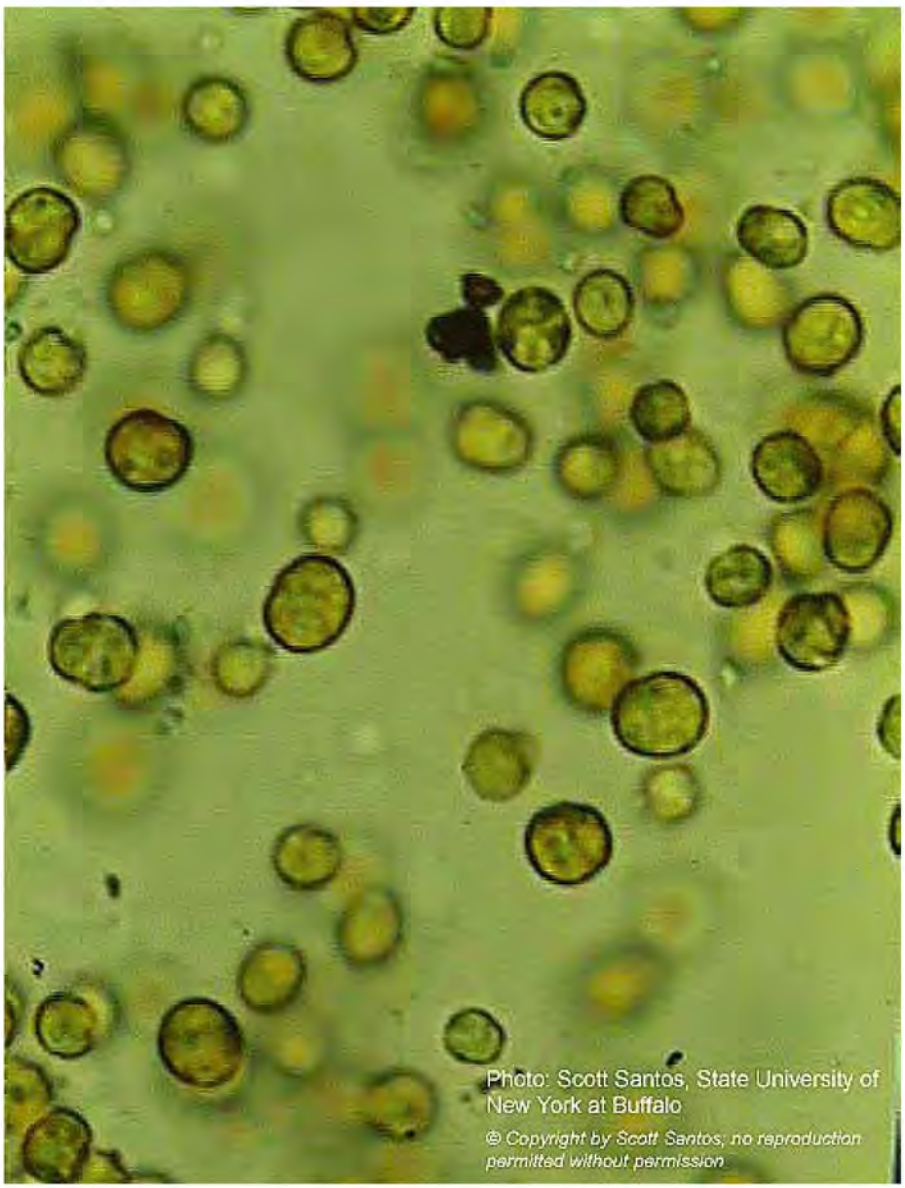
ZOOXANTHELLAE...WHAT'S THAT?

FEATURE **NOAA – OCEAN SERVICE EDUCATION**

Most reef-building corals contain photosynthetic algae, called zooxanthellae that live in their tissues. The corals and algae have a mutualistic relationship. The coral provides the algae with a protected environment and compounds they need for photosynthesis. In return, the algae produce oxygen and help the coral to remove wastes. Most importantly, zooxanthellae supply the coral with glucose, glycerol, and amino acids, which are the products of photosynthesis. The coral uses these products to make proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, and produce calcium carbonate. The relationship between the algae and coral polyp facilitates a tight recycling of nutrients in nutrient-poor tropical waters. In fact, as much as 90 percent of the organic material photosynthetically produced by the zooxanthellae is transferred to the host coral tissue. This is the driving force behind the growth and productivity of coral reefs.

In addition to providing corals with essential nutrients, zooxanthellae are responsible for the unique and beautiful colours of many stony corals. Sometimes when corals become physically stressed, the polyps expel their algal cells and the colony takes on a stark white appearance. This is commonly described as "coral bleaching". If the polyps go for too long without zooxanthellae, coral bleaching can result in the coral's death.

Because of their intimate relationship with zooxanthellae, reef-building corals respond to the environment like plants. Because their algal cells need light for photosynthesis, reef corals require clear water. For this reason they are generally found only in waters with small amounts of suspended material, i.e., in water of low turbidity and low productivity. This leads to an interesting paradox – coral reefs require clear, nutrient-poor water, but they are among the most productive and diverse marine environments.



Tiny plant cells called zooxanthellae live within most types of coral polyps. They help the coral survive by providing it with food resulting from photosynthesis. In turn, the coral polyps provide the cells with a protected environment and the nutrients they need to carry out photosynthesis.

© Wolcott Henry 2005/Marine Photobank

Zooxanthellae cells provide corals with pigmentation. On the left is a healthy stony coral. On the right is a stony coral that has lost its zooxanthellae cells and bleached.

CORAL BLEACHING – SUMMER 2010

FEATURE **RITA BENTO & NOAA CORAL REEF WATCH**

NOTE: This article was written in August. The bleaching status in the Arabian region could be different by the time this issue is published.


Photo by Craig Quirolo, Reef Relief/Marine Photobank

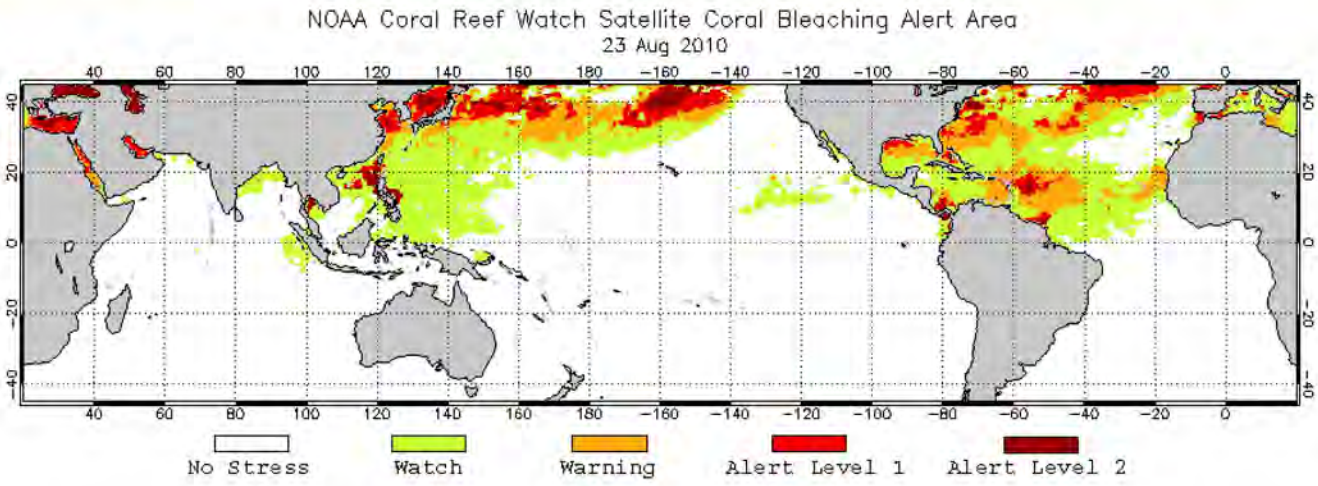
As the summer has arrived and the temperatures have increased, the heat stress starts to rise amongst corals. Every year by this time, reef managers keep an eye on their reefs hoping not to see any mass bleaching events and trying to reduce to a minimum the impacts on these sensitive colonies. In the Arabian region we are used to high temperatures in the summer as are some of our corals, but there are always threshold limits and corals can start to bleach. During our dives on the east coast during the month of July, we have started to observe bleaching in some small areas and as time passes, temperatures keep on rising as do the bleaching areas. The good news is that in our Reef Check dive in August we got a cold current of 27°C. For now it's nothing to be alarmed about and keep in mind that bleaching does not mean dead, so corals can recover if impacts and stresses are reduced. This is just a reminder that we as divers can also be an impact to our reefs, so during this sensitive moment where corals are more susceptible we can help by just looking at them and by completely avoiding to touch them with our hands, fins and dangling gear.

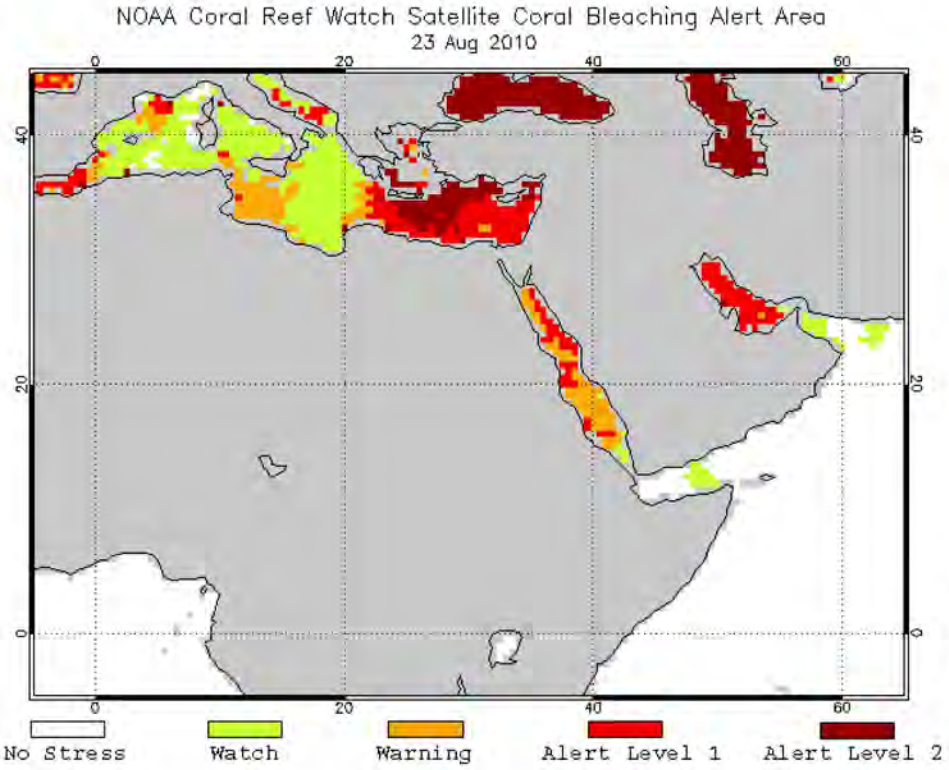
At this moment (middle of August) the coral reefs in the Arabian Region are under bleaching Watch, Warning and bleaching Alert Level 1 status according to NOAA's Coral Reef Watch Program (take a look at the maps).

NOAA's Coral Reef Watch Program's satellite data provides current reef environmental conditions to quickly identify areas at risk for coral bleaching where corals lose the symbiotic algae that give them their distinctive colours. If a coral is severely bleached, disease and partial mortality become likely, and the entire colony may die.

The NOAA Coral Reef Watch (CRW) satellite outlines the areas where bleaching thermal stress currently reaches various bleaching stress levels, based on the satellite sea surface temperature monitoring. The bleaching thermal stress levels are defined in the table below based on the current values of the NOAA CRW coral bleaching HotSpot and Degree Heating Weeks (DHW) products (see definitions below).

STRESS LEVEL	DEFINITION	POTENTIAL BLEACHING INTENSITY
No Stress	HotSpot ≤ 0	No Bleaching
Bleaching Watch	0 < HotSpot < 1	
Bleaching Warning	1 ≤ HotSpot and 0 < DHW < 4	Possible Bleaching
Bleaching Alert Level 1	1 ≤ HotSpot and 4 ≤ DHW < 8	Bleaching Likely
Bleaching Alert Level 2	1 ≤ HotSpot and 8 ≤ DHW	Mortality Likely





Cladocora caespitosa bleached. Photo by Roberto Boero, Pinna Sub Torina/Marine Photobank.

Corals are vulnerable to bleaching when the sea surface temperature (SST) exceeds the temperatures they would normally experience in the hottest month. A HotSpot is a region of sea surface temperature (SST) that exceeds the climatological maximum for a region by 1 degree celcius or more. These conditions may cause sufficient stress to coral reefs that result in coral bleaching. The HotSpot value of 1.0°C is a threshold for thermal stress leading to coral bleaching.

DEGREE HEATING WEEKS (DHW) DEFINITION

The HotSpot chart will give a snapshot of where corals are stressed right now. But the heat stress will build up if the temperature around the corals stays above the bleaching threshold over time. So we need some way to not only measure how far the temperature is above the threshold, but also how long it has stayed above. This is what the Degree Heating Weeks (DHW) product was designed to portray. Coral bleaching has been shown to be caused by prolonged periods of thermal stress. The DHW product accumulates any HotSpots greater than 1°C over a 12 week window, thus showing how stressful conditions have been for corals in the last three months. It is a cumulative measurement of the intensity and duration of thermal stress and is expressed in the unit °C-weeks. DHWs over 4°C-weeks have been shown to cause significant coral bleaching, and values over 8°C-weeks can cause widespread bleaching and some mortality.

ACTIONS

Here are some examples of direct actions that reef managers can take:

- restrict potentially stressful activities on the reef during and after the bleaching event, such as construction, diver access, and fishing;
- artificially shade or cool selected reefs to lessen the bleaching impacts;
- remove coral predators from the area to allow corals to recover;
- help new corals recruit to bleached reefs or transplant new corals;
- enhance the overall health of the corals by reducing pollution, coastal runoff, and overfishing; a healthy reef ecosystem is more able to recover.

In addition, there are some areas that may be naturally protected from the conditions that cause bleaching or where corals have adapted to very warm conditions. It is especially critical to identify and protect these areas.

Most importantly, researchers are still learning about this danger to coral reef ecosystems. The most valuable action we can take right now is intensive monitoring during and after bleaching events, so that we can learn more about the causes and consequences of coral bleaching. This knowledge will be critical for the long-term survival of the world's beautiful and valuable coral reefs

Coral Reef Watch is part of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and the National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service (NESDIS).

EDA REEF CHECK TRAINING
IN ABU DHABI WITH AL MAHARA DIVING CENTER

FEATURE **KATHLEEN RUSSELL, EDA ABU DHABI COMMITTEE COORDINATOR**

Eight enthusiastic Reef Check candidates took part with EDA's Reef Check Trainer and Marine Biologist Rita Bento. The participants received their Eco Diver certification at the end of the course and can now join in the Reef Check surveys for the Indo-Pacific marine species.

Candidates learned about the Indo-Pacific's marine species of fish, invertebrates and were trained to identify different kinds of substrates such as corals and sponges. Rita then took the group of intrepid divers to confined water and practised techniques to enhance the reef check surveys. The final day consisted of the open water species identification test, followed by a comprehensive powerpoint test against the ID of fish, invertebrates and substrate species of the Indo-Pacific environment.

Congratulations to all the successful candidates and we look forward to having you join EDA's Reef Check surveys in the Dibba and Al Aqah areas.

Comments from some of the participants:
"What a great training for all the divers!"
Philippe Lecomte, PADI Open Water Scuba Instructor

"Great and informative training conducted by Rita Bento, EDA. I think all scuba instructors should have Reef Check training to better understand the local marine environment and make a difference".
Kathleen Russell, PADI Master Instructor

If you would like to join the EDA Reef Check surveys, please contact projects@emiratesdiving.com. For more information about Reef Check, go to **http://www.reefcheck.org/**.


Some Reef Check participants


Some participants completing their fish identification exercises

BLEACHING ALERT - GLOBAL WARMING AND EL NINO - HOW BAD WILL IT GET?

By Reef Check Executive Director Dr. Gregor Hodgson

2010 is now officially the hottest year ever recorded since temperature has been measured. Unfortunately coral reefs are the most sensitive ecosystem on earth to global warming. The previous hottest year was 1997/98 and Reef Check teams tracked the damage via bleached corals and ultimately the loss of about 10% of the world's reef corals.

Corals are dependent upon their symbiotic algae for nutrition, and if the water becomes too warm for too long, the algae grow tails and simply swim away. If the now white "bleached" corals do not get their algae back after a couple of weeks, then they may die.

Unfortunately, reports have been coming in for two months from Southeast Asia and other parts of the world where water temperatures have exceeded normal levels resulting in massive bleaching in Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia (photo by Peter Heyes) and Indonesia.

Like 1998, it appears that the weather patterns associated with El Nino reduce wind mixing and wave action leading to pools of ocean water simply sitting and becoming overheated under clear skies.

Reef Check teams are working hard to track this new global bleaching event. As global warming continues, it is likely that these events will become more frequent. Several scientists have predicted that most coral reefs will be killed off in the next 50 years by global warming. But global warming can be stopped. Let's all work to stop it in time.

For more information, visit NOAA's Bleaching Outlook page:
http://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/satellite/bleachingoutlook/index.html

REEF CHECK INVITED TO CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE HAITI ACTION NETWORK MEETING

By Reef Check Executive Director Dr. Gregor Hodgson

Last month, Reef Check Board member Robert McClatchy and Director, Gregor Hodgson were invited to attend the Haiti Action Network meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative. The members of the Haiti Action Network are working on all aspects of the rebuilding of Haiti from schools, to medicine, to housing – but none of the current members are involved in the marine environment. The purpose of CGI is to bring diverse groups together to solve problems. This is clearly happening in Haiti and Reef Check is very pleased to have brought a marine perspective to the group. The food security issue in particular will be largely dependent on solving reef issues. Reef Check is planning the first complete survey of Haiti's reefs beginning in October.


Photo by Peter Heyes

EWS-WWF
MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

FEATURE **EWS-WWF (WWW.GULFTURTLES.COM)**

The Emirates Wildlife Society in association with WWF (EWS-WWF) has embarked on a region-wide marine turtle conservation project. Launched in April this year, the project has tagged 25 post-nesting female Hawksbill turtles throughout the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iran & Saudi Arabia. Each tagged turtle has been fitted with a satellite transmitter that will be sending signals of their whereabouts for approximately the next 360 days.

The goal of the Marine Turtle Conservation Project is to implement a comprehensive research and satellite tracking programme to conserve marine turtles of the Gulf and worldwide. The conservation plan will integrate stakeholders' involvement, scientific research and monitoring with environmental awareness centred on marine turtle conservation. EWS-WWF is working with the Marine Research Foundation as technical advisors to the project and all updates and tracking can be seen on **www.gulfturtles.com**.

Marine turtles in the Middle East are threatened, mostly through habitat loss and indirect capture in fisheries, and are in dire need of conservation action. With long maturation periods and low survival, they have extremely slow replenishment rates. Therefore, populations which have been depleted can take centuries to recover. To conserve these ancient treasures, we need to understand the biological and developmental needs of turtle populations, which is dependant heavily on the understanding of the extent of habitat use and distribution. For these highly migratory animals, today's advanced technology makes it possible, to determine the turtle's surprisingly long journeys through satellite tracking. By tracking the marine turtles through the Gulf region, we aim to raise awareness and to provide concrete linkages at a regional and international level on which these nations may develop concurrent conservation agendas.

Already, the project has had some interesting results from the tracking data. One turtle tagged in Oman is the first ever Hawksbill recorded to swim up into the Gulf from Oman. It is also interesting to see that none of the turtles have taken up residence on the east side of the Gulf. So far all of them have gone west or south, so the results are showing just how important the Gulf is as a Hawksbill feeding habitat.

This project will track at least 75 post-nesting female Hawksbill turtles over a 3 year period and will identify the critical overseas migration routes and near-shore habitats favoured by the turtles. The Hawksbill turtle is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List and is found in regional waters. These turtles depend on coastal habitats, including coral reefs for feeding and beaches for nesting at some stage of their life and this project will help us to locate these key areas in the Gulf. This will in turn help governments and conservation authorities when faced with making decisions that address coastal habitats and the marine environment.

EWS-WWF is grateful for the many partners who support this project and are directly involved in the research and monitoring of these Hawksbill turtles. Partnering agencies include:

IRAN: Wildlife & Aquatic Affairs Bureau of Iran
OMAN: Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs Environment Society of Oman (ESO)
UAE: Emirates Marine Environment Group (EMEG) Environment & Protected Areas Authority, Sharjah Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi
QATAR: Ministry of Environment
Qatar University
Ras Laffan Industrial City
SAUDI ARABIA: Saudi Wildlife Commission

Emirates Wildlife Society
EWS

WWF

Photo by Lisa Perry

Photo by Dr. Nicolas Pilcher

Photo by Dr. Nicolas Pilcher

SATELLITE TAGGING IN SUMATRA

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **DAVID ROBINSON**

The amazing beach close to the project base camp

In June this year I embarked upon an adventure without fully realising just how adventurous it would be.

It all began in April when I was lucky enough to be sent by work to attend the 30th Annual Sea Turtle Symposium that was being held in Goa, India. The conference was fantastic and as well as learning a lot, I also had the opportunity to meet up with many friends.

One of my friends I hadn't seen for over three years. Maggie Muurmans and I had worked together on Leatherback turtles in 2004 whilst I was writing my masters thesis. Maggie is a very dynamic and determined lady of Indonesian origin but raised in Holland. She started to tell me about all the amazing work she had started in Indonesia, a turtle project on an extremely remote Island in Southern Sumatra and a community outreach and education programme working with the local community. Maggie mentioned that earlier in the year she had received funding to buy two satellite transmitters and asked if I would be willing to fly out to help her and her team attach them. So, with the thought of a tropical beach and remote island paradise in mind I selflessly offered my services. We agreed for 10 days in June to deploy the tags as this was the time that the local sea turtle festival was occurring and it also coincided with 'World Sea Turtle Day'.

Working for the Jumeirah Group at the Burj Al Arab Aquarium, part of my job is to assist with the running of the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project. As part of my job I had assisted with the attachment of four satellite transmitters all of which were sponsored by Jumeirah with the last being sponsored by Burj Al Arab. Upon my return from Goa I approached my boss Warren Baverstock and Kevin Hyland of the Wildlife Protection Office who both manage the DTRP with the proposal of travelling to Indonesia to help Maggie and her local NGO; and as I suspected, they were both more than happy to help out. The main problem was sourcing the correct epoxy that would set fast enough but not generate too much heat. Kevin in Dubai had supplied me with a lot of the materials and he also put me in touch with Max and Ricky at Premier Composites in Dubai who kindly donated the epoxy to help us with the project.

With a lot of help and tagging supplies from Warren and Kevin a month later I was on a Malaysian Airways flight headed to Medan in Sumatra via Kuala Lumpur. This was to be my first time travelling to Indonesia and indeed South-East Asia and so I wasn't really sure what to expect.

Upon arrival in Medan I was collected by Angke the Medan based administrator and Mr Mahmud Bangkaru, who is from Sweden and one of the founders of the project alongside Maggie. Carrying my bag filled with all sorts of tagging materials such as epoxies, sand paper and paints, we departed the airport for the city. Medan was what I was expecting it to be, a busy metropolis with a few shopping malls and markets. Maggie arrived in the evening and we stayed overnight in a small local hotel. Maggie and I worked on setting the tags up ready for deployment on the turtles into the early hours as she explained that where we were going there was no Internet or telephone signal. Usually I would be very pleased to hear this but with the idea of trying to use such a technological device within a remote area, this became a distinct stress for us both; how could we be 100% sure that the tags were transmitting before we attached them to the turtle if we have no access to a phone or internet?

The tags are not cheap and cost around AED10,500 each but that is not all, you then have to pay for every transmission that the tag makes and these costs can be in excess of the initial tag cost and usually average out at around AED7,000. The tag works by transmitting a signal to a satellite every time the turtle comes up to breath. There are two metallic saltwater switches on the tag and when they are exposed to air, the current between them is broken and they transmit data to satellites orbiting above that then triangulate the location of the turtle. This signal is sent to a company in France called Argos who then translate the information into a user friendly map form so that the tag owner can easily interpret where in the world their turtle is in real time.

I was awoken by Maggie at 5:00am after only

Maggie and her dedicated team watching Eva returning to the sea

a few hours sleep and we started our journey to Paula Bankaru our ultimate destination. We had a surprisingly pleasant nine-hour car journey from Medan to a port in the province of Aceh. The drive was stunning with the majority of the journey being made through prime rain forest habitat. We then reached the port of Singkil in Aceh province and boarded a speedboat headed to the main Island of Pulau Balai in the Pulau Banyak archipelago that is made up of 62 islands covering 50sqkm. The journey took a little over two hours and luckily it was quite calm. Balai is made up of lots of small houses on stilts around the shoreline. The streets are paved with coral sand and the roads are made from chunks of coral that has been mined. The population is small at 7000 and the community obviously quite close as everybody recognised and greeted Maggie as we walked through the streets.

We stayed over night in Balai at a small hotel that had air conditioning but unfortunately the electricity was out and so we had a very hot and sticky night, but it was soon over and we woke early to set off to Maggie's Island Pulau Bangkaru.

The journey took another two hours by speedboat and it became very choppy as we crossed an exposed channel. Upon arrival, I was amazed at the camp Maggie had built; she started working here in 2006 and at that time there was one single hut, from her description she had obviously prepared me for the worst. My job as a marine biologist has taken me all over the world and to some extremely basic projects but here I was presented with a nicely cultivated garden full of herbs and vegetables with a brand new building capable of sleeping 18 people comfortably and with functioning and very clean toilets and kitchens. All the water comes directly from the mountain and since the island is completely uninhabited the water is clean and safe. Maggie explained that this was all built with funds from the Spanish Development Aid and money from the future for nature award who see this project as extremely important for the local area.

At the camp, Maggie has a team of 12 permanent staff who are all local to the area. Every night and morning they tirelessly patrol the beaches in shifts monitoring the turtle populations. There are three species of turtle that nest on the island: hawksbill, green and leatherback with the green being the most frequently encountered. Volunteers from all over the world donate their time and efforts to volunteer here and help with the surveying and they also have the opportunity to become involved in the community outreach programme on the main island of P. Balai. Maggie limits the volunteers to four at a time as she wants everyone to have a truly remote experience and by limiting the numbers it also keeps the staff happy and less stressed.

After 20 minutes on the island I start to relax and change into my shorts for a swim and snorkel. The reef bordering the camp beach was full of life and had a great diversity of corals and butterflyfish. There had been a bleaching effect from an earthquake that happened some years ago, lifting the island and exposing some of the reef, but it seemed to be adapting well. Maggie mentioned that in the future they may start diving and I am sure there would be some amazing reefs to explore.

That evening we were joined by Mr Mahmud and an Indonesian celebrity travelling with his entourage that had come to the area for the ongoing turtle festival. They had travelled all the way to the island for the night to watch us deploy a tag on a turtle. His name was H. Deddy Mizwar and he was wearing a t-shirt from the Cannes film festival, I was told that he had made over 70 movies and that he was one of the most famous actors in Indonesia. I gave a talk to all the staff and guests to the protocols of satellite tagging and started to unpack my heavily laden bag with all the materials.

Night came around and the threat of rain was very real which jeopardised our plans for that nights tagging. The guys working on the island mentioned that there was a small hut on the nesting beach that was relatively waterproof and they could extend it using a tarpaulin, then, if it rained, we could move the turtle to shelter whilst we tag her.

As nesting time came around all the guys set off for the nesting beach in front of us to wait for the turtles to come. We set off about an hour later, one of my concerns was that we wouldn't find a turtle to tag but Maggie

explained that there are turtles every single night nesting on this Island. The nesting beach is 1.9km long and is a 30-minute trek through the rain forest. Just as we set off the heavens opened and rain started to pour down. The track that we were walking on turned into a small stream and we all started slipping and sliding as we progressed. I glanced back at H. Deddy Mezwar and his followers and to my surprise they seemed to be enjoying the experience.

So after what seemed like an eternity, we emerged from the forest completely soaked and covered in mud and we started the walk down the beach to find the guys. I didn't mention anything to Maggie but I was thinking that there was no way that we would be able to attach a sat tag in these conditions but I carried on regardless. Soon we came to a river that was crossing the beach. Maggie stopped and started to shine her torch up and down the water and explained that she was looking for crocodiles that were often spotted in the water. She then made a mad dash for the other bank and called for us to proceed. With visions of wildebeest crossing the rivers on their annual migrations through East Africa I jumped into the water and ran across as quickly as I could. We all made it across the river alive and with all our limbs in tact and we soon came across the patrolling men who informed us that they had a turtle for us. They took us to a clearing in the vegetation and I stepped through to find a huge green turtle in a perfectly made holding box and sheltered under a tarpaulin attached to a little shack and I suddenly began to realise that the tagging may actually be possible.

We all scrambled into the dryness of the shelter and I began to clean the carapace of the turtle so that we could start the attachment. It was around 10pm when we started working and after six hours of applying different types of epoxies and paints we were ready to go and the turtle was ready to be released. We were all exhausted including the turtle but we mustered all the strength we could and lifted her back onto the beach where she could make her way back into the water. Maggie named her 'Maia' after her three year old daughter and we all watched whilst she made her way back to the sea. This was the first time a sea turtle had been satellite tagged in the whole of Sumatra and so we were all very excited to see where 'Maia' would travel.

We then made our way back along the beach, across the crocodile river and back through the now water soaked rainforest. Upon our return I quickly showered and washed off all the mud and then fell exhausted into my bed.

I awoke the next day wrapped in my mosquito net that had fallen down during the night. Luckily the mosquitoes were not bad at all and I had only fallen victim to a few bites. I looked out of the window to see the forest and

The Yayassan Palau Banyak living quarters

Maggie and I attaching the first of the transmitters

beach and realised that the three days I had here were simply not enough. It was still early but the sun was high and bright. I walked to the communal area were I was greeted with locally produced coffee and banana pancakes served with limejuice and fresh coconut shavings, delicious!

I then spent the morning snoozing in the hammocks and listening to the sounds of the jungle. Later I started to prepare for the next tag to be applied. Nightfall soon came and the patrol team set off on the jungle trek to the nesting beach and we shortly followed. Luckily this night there was no rain and we all stayed dry.

The second tagging was much like the first and a great success. The turtle was tagged a lot later in the night and so by the time we had finished morning time had come around and we managed to get some nice shots of the turtle returning to the sea. The second turtle was named Eva after one of the main sponsors of the projects daughter.

Upon returning to the camp I managed to get a few hours sleep before starting the long journey back to Dubai. On the way we stopped to see the local turtle festival that was being held on the main island and attracted lots of Indonesian celebrities. The turtle project had managed to create something very unique in this region and everyone respected all the staff involved in the project and seemed to embrace the idea of protecting the turtles and grateful for the steady flow of tourists coming to the islands for a turtle experience.

If you would like to volunteer with Yayassan Palau Banyak then please visit **www.acehturtleconservation.org** for more information. I would recommend a minimum of three weeks to really relax and enjoy the experience.

If you find a stranded or injured turtle in Dubai then please call the DTRP on +971 4 310 7198.

DUBAI TURTLE REHABILITATION PROJECT: SATELLITE TAGGING AND RELEASE

The DTRP team and guests releasing several rehabilitated hawksbill turtles back into the wild

On June 16th, Burj Al Arab kindly provided a satellite transmitter for a 35kg rehabilitated green turtle so that we could track her journey and to help with our research of the movements of turtles within the Arabian Gulf. This is the Dubai Rehabilitation Project's fourth satellite tag application and all of our tags so far have been sponsored by Jumeirah Group. Moonlight was the name given to the turtle and she was released on June 8th along with another green turtle weighing 110kg, called 'Sabri' (which means endurance in Arabic), and 23 critically endangered juvenile hawksbill turtles that had all been through rehabilitation at the Project.

All of the turtles were released with left and right individually numbered titanium flipper tags with the name and address of the Dubai Wildlife Protection Office. During this release our landmark 100th flipper tagged turtle was released bringing the total number of animals released back into the wild so far to 110. All released turtles that pass through the hands of Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project are also micro-chipped with AVID tags in the left front flipper; we use this form of marking to keep track in-house and assist with medical and growth records.

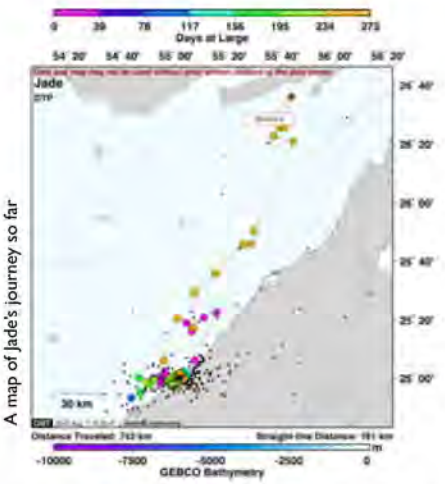
Moonlight was named by a class in Year 6 of Dubai English Speaking School who were the winners of Jumeirah's 'name the turtle competition'. We consider the information that Moonlight will provide very important as most other tracking studies are performed on post-nesting females. Moonlight belongs to a different age-cohort, being a sub-adult green turtle of undetermined sex, and so he/she may highlight areas of importance or make a journey that may differ from the usual tracking data. At the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project we have the opportunity to track turtles not just of breeding age or single sex, but of many different age cohorts, which allows us to build a fuller picture of their usage of the oceans.

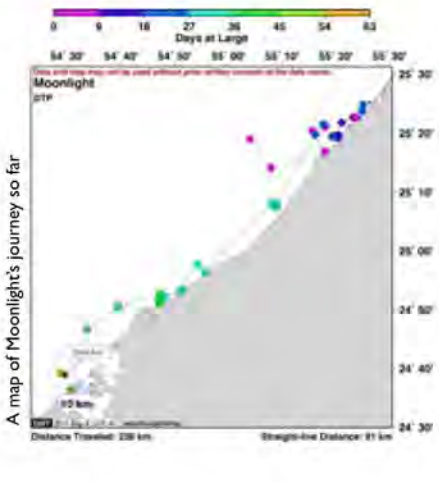
Another turtle released by the DTRP was Jade. Released in November 2009 along with 15 rehabilitated juvenile hawksbills, Jade initially travelled some distance in a North Easterly direction, and left Dubai waters for the neighboring Emirate. Now, well into the expected life-span of the transmitter battery pack, Jade has spent the majority of her time in the Jebel Ali area of the Dubai coastline. Although less dramatic a journey than our previous ocean traveler, Dibba, the very fact that she chose to linger in the Jebel Ali area is of interest. Extraordinarily, this is the exact location that she was retrieved from in a highly debilitated state, when she was first brought into the project. Historically this area has long been associated with turtle sightings and even as a possible dugong grazing area. Jonathan Ali Khan and Dr Bernard Reigel both highlighted this area in the late '80s, early 90's as an important sea-grass habitat, and at that time possible dugong grazing tracks were recorded in the area; it was subsequently declared a marine reserve. Perhaps Jade's choice of abode goes to reinforce the importance of this area to turtles in the region.

The most recent data indicates a shift once again in Jade's position. She is on the move northwards and has taken residence in the coastal waters of Iran. Could she be heading to nesting beaches? Has the recent seasonal increase in coastal water temperature caused her to seek deeper waters? Will she continue through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Gulf of Oman? The journey continues…

If you would like to see more pictures of the most recent release and how Moonlight was tagged, or to interact with us at the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project then please visit us on Facebook **www.facebook.com/turtle.rehabilitation** or at our website **www.dubaiturtles.com**. You can follow all of our tagged turtles at **http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?project_id=55**

If you find a sick or injured turtle in Dubai then please call the DTRP on 04 301 7198.





The DTRP team releasing Jade

Photo by Warren Baverstock

SMALL BOAT DIVING

FEATURE **ASSER SALAMA (TDI/SDI/CMAS INSTRUCTOR)**

© Haitham Aziz – divers pick-up using a 4.8 metre (16 feet) length RIB equipped with a single 25 horsepower outboard engine.

Small boats open new horizons for divers. Nowadays, more divers with non-diving partners/families/children are trying to split their vacation time so that all family members are satisfied. As the operational cost of small boats is fairly lower than that of bigger ones, they are ideal for small groups and short excursions.

Moreover, small boats are particularly useful when used for shore drift dives or diving in rough sea conditions. In choppy seas when traditional dive crafts fear collision with the reef, small boats are used for divers' pick up. In addition, due to their increased mobility, small boats provide additional safety. They are commonly used to recover separated and lost divers, and in at least one incident in the Red Sea they were used as life rafts to rescue divers when their main 30 metre (100 feet) dive vessel sank.

SMALL BOAT TYPES

The main types of small boats are rigid inflatable boats (RIBs, sometimes referred to as zodiacs), fully inflatable boats and small fiberglass boats. The size of these boats usually varies from 3 to 9 metres (10 to 30 feet). They are normally equipped with one or two engines ranging from 15 to 225 horsepower. They are either moored in water or transported to land by trailers. Actually some small-size fully inflatable boats fit in car trunks.

DIVE PLANNING

Small boats are seaworthy, stable, buoyant and depending on the installed engine(s), fast. They have a good loading capacity and a low freeboard (height above the water), which provides easy water entries and exits for divers. Inflatable boats are difficult to sink, even if filled with water or have a ruptured floatation chamber. However, they can easily roll over. That's why divers should sit on opposite sides so that their mass is evenly distributed. Divers should assemble their equipment beforehand, put on their suits and boots, hang the masks on their necks and get done with putting on the rest of their equipment when they reach the dive site. In rough sea conditions, putting on all the equipment beforehand is highly recommended. They enter the water from opposite sides either by dropping over the side or using the backward roll technique. It is worth noting that in choppy seas a negative water entry is advisable. To achieve that, some divers feel comfortable adding a little more weight to overcome the water's up-thrust force. Others prefer emptying the BCD completely onboard by orally sucking all the air out through the power inflator and exhaling while descending.

A "divers down" flag should be raised on the small boat as long as there are divers in the water. After the dive and upon reaching the small boat, the diver should hold the boat's side with one hand, remove the weight belt with the other, hand the weight belt to the coxswain, remove the equipment (tank, BCD and regulator) while still holding the small boat, hand the equipment to the coxswain, fin upwards with the body in vertical position and climb to enter the boat. Removing the fins before entering the small boat is not a wise idea. On the way back, divers should again sit equally on opposite sides.

SMALL BOAT HANDLING

Small boat diving requires extra planning. When the small boat is loaded on a trailer, it is either lifted off the trailer and carried to the water or launched from the trailer directly to the water. In the first case it is launched bow first while in the second it is launched stern first. It is worth noting that if the boat is launched from the trailer directly to the water, special attention should be given to the engine in order not to hit something (seabed, rocks, etc…). Also take into consideration that small boats are easily vulnerable to damage so they must be handled with care.

It is worth noting that the small boat should never be left unattended. Never attempt to act as a coxswain and a diver at the same time. Having a dedicated coxswain onboard is mandatory. Since the small boats' low position in water sometimes inhibits the sighting of objects such as rocks or coral pinnacles, divers should always help the coxswain and watch for hazards. Throughout the dive, the coxswain should follow the divers' bubbles or look for DSMBs while moving around for divers' pick-up. Take into consideration that tying the small boat to the reef or anchoring it at a dive site is not a brilliant idea, as it hinders the operation of divers' pick-up. Moreover, being free ensures maximum speed in case of rescue.

When diving from shore and based on the dive plan, the coxswain should estimate the total excursion time and give an estimated time-of-return to the shore-based personnel. This saves invaluable time if a rescue operation is to be initiated.

EQUIPMENT, CARE AND FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Small boats should be regularly inspected and serviced. The floatation chambers of inflatable boats should be pumped to the manufacturer's recommended capacity. The engine(s) should be trimmed correctly and the maintenance should be carried out regularly on a scheduled basis. If used to reach far dive sites from shore, small boats should be equipped with a portable VHF radio to maintain contact with other boats and/or shore-based personnel. A first aid kit, an oxygen kit, fresh drinking water and suitable lamps in case night diving is considered are also mandatory. Flares should be added to the list, local laws and regulations permitting.

It is worth noting that the travel time to the dive site should not exceed 30 minutes, especially in rough sea conditions. Take into consideration that small boats are uncomfortable and a bumpy ride could easily cause motion sickness. They also lack deck space and are usually unsheltered so divers are subject to wind chill. According to the sea conditions, appropriate thermal and wind protection should be considered while planning the dive. Hot drinks could be provided accordingly. If you know that you are vulnerable to motion sickness, use appropriate medication 30 minutes before the ride.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asser Salama is a mechanical power engineer, an MBA degree holder, and a TDI/SDI/CMAS instructor. He teaches both recreational and technical diving courses and organizes trips all over the Egyptian Red Sea. Asser is the current president of Red Sea Shadow, the largest online SCUBA diving community in Egypt. He enjoys writing and software development. Email Asser at asser@red-sea-shadow.com or call him on 0020 11 255 4533.

© TGI Dive Center El Gouna – a fibre glass hulled boat: 7 metre (23 feet) length equipped with a single 140 horsepower outboard engine.

FEDERAL SCIENCE REPORT DETAILS **FATE OF OIL FROM BP SPILL**

FEATURE **NOAA – NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**

Patrick Kelley, U.S. Coast Guard/Marine Photobank.

The vast majority of the oil from the BP oil spill has either evaporated or been burned, skimmed, recovered from the wellhead or dispersed much of which is in the process of being degraded. A significant amount of this is the direct result of the robust federal response efforts.

A third (33 percent) of the total amount of oil released in the Deepwater Horizon/BP spill was captured or mitigated by the Unified Command recovery operations, including burning, skimming, chemical dispersion and direct recovery from the wellhead, according to a federal science report released today.

An additional 25 percent of the total oil naturally evaporated or dissolved, and 16 percent was dispersed naturally into microscopic droplets. The residual amount, just over one quarter (26 percent), is either on or just below the surface as residue and weathered tarballs, has washed ashore or been collected from the shore, or is buried in sand and sediments. Dispersed and residual oil remain in the system until they degrade through a number of natural processes. Early indications are that the oil is degrading quickly.

These estimates were derived by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), who jointly developed what is known as an Oil Budget Calculator, to provide measurements and best estimates of what happened to the spilled oil.

The calculator is based on 4.9 million barrels of oil released into the Gulf, the governments Flow Rate Technical Group estimate from Monday. More than 25 of the best government and independent scientists contributed to or reviewed the calculator and its calculation methods.

DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL BUDGET

"Teams of scientists and experts have been carefully tracking the oil since day one of this spill, and based on the data from those efforts and their collective expertise, they have been able to provide these useful and educated estimates about the fate of the oil," says Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Less oil on the surface does not mean that there isn't oil still in the water column or that our beaches and marshes aren't still at risk. Knowing generally what happened to the oil helps us better understand areas of risk and likely impacts."

The estimates do not make conclusions about the long-term impacts of oil on the Gulf. Fully understanding the damages and impacts of the spill on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem is something that will take time and continued monitoring and research.

Dispersion increases the likelihood that the oil will be biodegraded, both in the water column and at the surface. While there is more analysis to be done to quantify the rate of biodegradation in the Gulf, early observations and preliminary research results from a number of scientists show that the oil from the BP Deepwater Horizon spill is biodegrading quickly. Scientists from NOAA, EPA, DOE, and academic scientists are working to calculate more precise estimates of this rate.

It is well known that bacteria that break down the dispersed and weathered surface oil are abundant in the Gulf of Mexico in large part because of the warm water, the favorable nutrient and oxygen levels, and the fact that oil enters the Gulf of Mexico through natural seeps regularly.

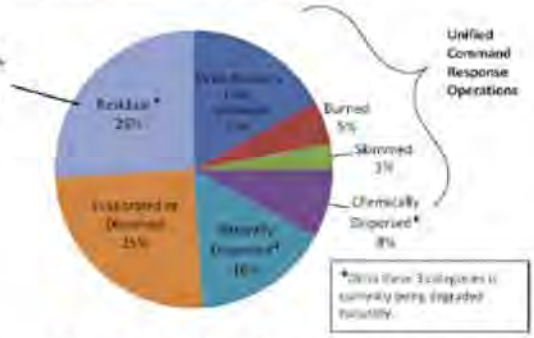
Residual oil is also degraded and weathered by a number of physical and biological processes. Microbes consume the oil, and wave action, sun, currents and continued evaporation and dissolution continue to break down the residual oil in the water and on shorelines.

The oil budget calculations are based on direct measurements wherever possible and the best available scientific estimates where measurements were not possible. The numbers for direct recovery and burns were measured directly and reported in daily operational reports. The skimming numbers were also based on daily reported estimates. The rest of the numbers were based on previous scientific analyses, best available information and a broad range of scientific expertise. These estimates will continue to be refined as additional information becomes available.

Further information on the calculation methods is available online in the Deepwater Horizon Gulf Incident Budget Tool Report from Aug 1, 2010: (http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/PDFsDeepwaterHorizonOilBudget20100801.pdf)

Deepwater Horizon Oil Budget

Based on estimated release of 4.9m barrels of oil



UAE NATIONAL FREEDIVING CHAMPION BREAKS MULTIPLE FREEDIVING RECORDS

PHOTOGRAPHY **FRED BUYLE**

PRESS RELEASE
Abu Dhabi, 21 June 2010

Adel Abu Haliqa, the UAE National Freediving Champion, has broken two Asian continental records and two UAE national records at the 3rd Mediterranean World Cup held in Greece.

Adel started Freediving in 2006 and has become increasingly passionate about a sport which "allows me to be at one with the underwater world and myself" says Adel, Freediving UAE co-founder and UAE National Champion. Adel added "I am honoured and proud to be representing the UAE in the World Cup".

Adel explained his performances over the 5 day competition by saying, "I didn't have the chance to train at depth in the UAE, so I had to announce performances that I haven't dived before. The dives were all very comfortable and I think I can go deeper".

During the competition Adel broke the Variable Weight and No Limits Asian continental records and the UAE Free Immersion and Constant Weight No Fins national records. The records now stand at:

Freediving Discipline	Old Record (meters)	New Record (meters)	Status
Free Immersion	37	45	New UAE National Record
Constant Weight No Fins	25	27	New UAE National Record
Variable Weight	n/a	65	New Asian Continental Record
No Limits	n/a	77	New Asian Continental Record

Adel became a qualified AIDA Freediving instructor in 2010 and has since trained over 20 students in the UAE. "Freediving is a rapidly growing sport within the UAE and we aim to raise its profile because it has such a strong connection with our heritage of pearl diving" said Adel. "I would also like to see more UAE nationals competing internationally because it is in our blood" Adel added. FreedivingUAE are currently looking for sponsorship to support this growing sport in the UAE.

Adel is based in Abu Dhabi but his company, FreedivingUAE which he co-founded with Alex Boulting (also an AIDA Instructor) in 2009, offers Freediving courses and training across the UAE. "With water temperatures of over 30°C this is the perfect place for all year round Freediving", says Alex. "We run Freediving courses and trips every month as we are starting to create a community of Freedivers in the UAE" adds Alex.

COMPETITIVE FREEDIVING

Competitive Freediving consists of 8 disciplines which are:

- Static Apnea (STA) – The freediver holds their breath, face down with their respiratory tracts immersed in water, generally in a swimming pool. It is essentially a mind game where the freediver is trying to control their urge to breathe. The current world record is 11 minutes 35 seconds.
- Dynamic Apnea with Fins (DYN) – Freedivers compete on how far they can travel horizontally underwater in a swimming pool using fins (usually mono fins) on one breath. The current world record is 250 metres.
- Dynamic Apnea without Fins (DNF) – Freedivers compete on how far they can travel horizontally underwater on one breath in a swimming pool without any propulsion aid i.e. only using their feet and hands in a breaststroke-like movement. The current world record is 213 meters.
- Constant Weight with Fins (CWT) – The freediver descends and ascends in open water (usually the sea) with the same amount of weight using fins (usually a monofin) and is only allowed to touch the rope to turn. The current world record is 124 meters.
- Constant Weight without Fins (CNF) – The freediver descends and ascends in open water (usually the sea) with the same amount of weight using only his feet and arms as propulsion and is only allowed to touch the rope to turn. The current world record is 94 meters.
- Free Immersion (FIM) – Freedivers can only use the rope as a form of propulsion by pulling themselves down on the decent and up on the ascent. The current world record is 120 meters.
- Variable weight (VWT) – The freediver descends with the assistance of ballast and ascends without the weight pulling on the line or using fins as propulsion. The current world record is 142 meters.
- No limits (NLT) – The freediver descends with the assistance of ballast and ascends assisted usually using an inflatable lift bag. This is a pure depth discipline. The current world record is 214 meters.

The majority of Freediving competitions are managed and overseen by AIDA, the Worldwide Federation for breath-hold diving. AIDA was established in 1992 and also sets the standards for freediving education. Since 1993, AIDA International has officiated 228 Official World Records.
http://www.aida-international.org/

FREEDIVINGUAE

FreedivingUAE was co-founded by Adel Abu Haliqa and Alex Boulting in 2009. It is a professional community of free divers who have a passion for passively exploring the underwater world. FreedivingUAE is the only company in the UAE specializing in courses and training in Freediving. FreedivingUAE aims to connect the UAE heritage of pearl diving with the modern world of Freediving. FreedivingUAE is currently working to get Freediving recognized in the UAE and create Freediving as a popular sport. In the future we aim to put the UAE on the international Freediving map by organizing a national team and running Freediving competitions.
http://www.freedivinguae.com/index.html

ADEL ABU HALIQA

Adel started Freediving in December 2006 and just loved it. He had the honour to set the first UAE Freediving national records in both the pool and depth disciplines in 2008 and is now a regular at Freediving competitions. He is also the co-founder of FreedivingUAE.

GAS GUZZLER

FEATURE **SARA-LISE HAITH**

Are you a fuel-efficient diver, or are you always 50 bar or more behind your diving buddy? Are you always looking worriedly at the approaching red area on your SPG or the only person lugging a 15 litre tank over the side of a diving boat?

Or would you simply like to have longer, happier dives and get more air for your money?

Then the Gas Guzzler © course is the answer for you!

This world unique course has been specially designed for scuba divers to get the very most out of their tank and dive and is written by AIDA Freediving InstructorTrainer Emma Farrell[1], along with recommendations and input from various experienced Scuba Instructors around the globe.

The Gas Guzzler course looks at each diver as an individual to work out why they are using so much air and how to correct this through looking at their breathing, kit, technique and trim in the water, diet, physiology, psychology and buddy. Each diver after taking the course immediately comes up with an average or between 50 and 70 extra bar in their tank and a feeling that the dive was altogether easier and more relaxed, so the course is an incredibly quick way to vastly improve your dive, both in terms of time spent underwater and also in terms of enjoyment!

On an average, female scuba divers use less air than men however with correct breathing techniques and some basic tips, all scuba divers can learn to keep up with the smallest of lungs and enjoy the same amount of time underwater together. As women are physically smaller, they have a lower requirement for oxygen at a given level of physical activity and will produce less carbon dioxide. With smaller lungs, women also take smaller breaths. Thus, women can often manage with less air than a male diving companion. I have seen couples who go on diving holidays together and their partners sense a frustration of having to "come up early". Those holidays are about to pass and couples can enjoy a full dive together by just learning correct breathing techniques. Remember, Jacques Mayol once said "the size of the lung has nothing to do with it".

The Gas Guzzler course modules have practical exercises done in the classroom which involve breathing rhythms using different counts and exercises which are designed to slow down breathing patterns and relax the body. Emphasis is placed on avoiding hyperventilation and the risks of hyperventilation, both acute and chronic. According to Dennis Lewis; the author of the highly acclaimed books such as The Tao of Natural Breathing and Free Your Breath, Free Your Life; says that the effects of chronic hyperventilation (a breathing rate that is too high and practiced unconsciously 24/7) go far beyond mental and emotional symptoms such as anxiety and fearfulness. Lewis states that some researchers and medical doctors now believe on the basis of many studies; that the overly high breathing rate of chronic hyperventilation is instrumental in some 200 medical problems and diseases, including asthma, heart disease, high blood pressure, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, memory loss, sinusitis, arthritis, panic attacks, stress, rhinitis, headaches, heartburn, and many more.

The many benefits of learning to breathe correctly are evident and the Gas Guzzler course covers many different breathing techniques to assist people to overcome any breathing problems they may have.[2]

As well as helping the student to understand why humans use too much air and teaching the correct breathing both in and out of the water, the knowledge development also looks at other factors that contribute to increased air consumption. It teaches divers how to be more "fuel-efficient", in terms of air usage and also improves your breathing technique for increased lung efficiency.

Scuba diving equipment is also key to a comfortable dive and incorrect weighting, fit, and distribution are key elements of an unsuccessful dive. Other areas of scuba equipment are also discussed in detail and how the setup of your rig can affect your diving skills and ability to breathe easily.

Different finning and equalisation techniques are also learnt and practised and also exercises designed to gain and build confidence. There are several exercises which concentrate on mind and body balance as it is often noticed that scuba divers breathe rapidly and nervously due to lack of confidence and even excitement and these exercises assist divers to overcome initial stress, especially experienced on a descent. Divers will learn skills to keep their minds calm and focussed while keeping the breathing pattern rhythmic and gentle. Students also learn how to practice visualisation of their dive before actually jumping in. This is particularly useful if a diver is about to do a negative entry dive into a current or if he/she is about to do a technical dive where thought will be required on different processes, like gas switches, decompression stops and any skills required at depth.

There are two guided scuba dives included in the Gas Guzzler Course: a 'before dive' where we can get to know you and how you dive, and an 'after' where you can put all you have learnt into practice. Each student also has an individual equipment review done prior to diving to make sure that the diver is using the right kit for their physique and needs.

At the end of the course, students are given a handout which covers all the information and extra practice they can do at home. The handout also has a detailed explanation of the Frenzel equalisation technique written by Canadian freediving champion and world record holder Eric Fattah.

Gas Guzzler courses will start in September 2010 and divers can book directly with Al Boom Diving Centre. Prices of the course will be published by Al Boom in due course.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO PRACTICE MY BREATHING?

1. Freediving Courses. These can help you learn to relax in the water, improve equalisation, be more hydrodynamic and build confidence. Go to www.alboomdiving.com/freediving for more details on upcoming courses or visit www.divasindubai.com for information on freediving.
2. PADI Peak Performance Buoyancy Course – To improve body position and learn how to use your lungs to control your buoyancy.
3. Yoga classes. These can help improve the flexibility of your body, particularly your diaphragm and rib cage and will improve your breath control. Dubai based instructor Noura El-Imam teaches "Yogilates" which fuses Yoga & Pilates in a 1 hour session which strengthens & tones your muscles while calming the mind. Call 050 3289642 or email: yogalatesdxb@aol.com for class venues/timings in DXB.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

One Breath: A Reflection on Freediving
Emma Farrell
Pynto Ltd
http://www.pynto.com/onebreath

The Breathing Book: Good health and vitality through essential breath work
Donna Farhi
Henry Holt and Company
ISBN 0 8050 4297 0

Don't Hold Your Breath. A Guide to Good Breathing
Jenny Beeken
Polair Publishing
ISBN 0 9545389-9-4

The Yoga of Breath. A Step by Step Guide to Pranayama
Richard Rosen
Shambhala Publications
ISBN 978-1-57062-889-4

Light on Pranayama. The Yogic Art of Breathing
B.K.S Iyengar
Crossroad Publishing Company
ISBN 0 8245 06863 0

YOGA The Path to Holistic Health
B.K.S Iyengar
Dorling Kindersley
ISBN 0 7513 2617 2

The Frenzel Technique, Step-by-Step
by Eric Fattah, Copyright © 2001
efattah@interchange.ubc.ca

REFERENCES:

[1] Emma Farrell is a founding member of the AIDA International Education Commission, setting course guidelines and standards for Instructors worldwide, and has written the unique 'Gas Guzzler' course designed to help scuba divers with their breathing underwater. Al Boom Dive is the first dive centre ever to be given the opportunity to offer this course and it will be taught exclusively by IDC Staff Instructor and AIDA Freediving Instructor Sara-Lise Haith. Emma is a trained Sivananda Yoga teacher and a practicising Reflexologist and she has used her in-depth knowledge of physiology and years of teaching divers and athletes how to breathe to develop the content of this course.

[2] Note: The Gas Guzzler course is not designed to guarantee a solution to severe respiratory problems and students should always seek professional medical advice.

UPDATE: THE SHARKWATCH ARABIA INITIATIVE

FEATURE **DAVID ROBINSON**

Since its launch in June of this year, the response to Sharkwatch Arabia for whale shark sightings has been a largely encouraging one. Despite being in its early stages as a dedicated whale shark research project, the diving communities in this region obviously do care considerably about these large and majestic creatures as is shown by the amount of support we have received so far. I am happy to say that we have already received many images of whale sharks from around the region suggesting that there may be a significantly larger number of animals visiting our waters than previously thought. Many divers have started to support the cause by sending in images that they have taken whilst diving and slowly but surely dive centers are also offering help with data collection.

We still have a long way to go in order to get everybody onboard and helping. We are now calling on all dive centers and dive professionals to contact us to help out with data collection. Over the next few months we will be putting data collection and research protocols in place to help with data collection; and we need help and support from the diving community to be able to do this. If you are willing to help then please get in touch, there is no cost involved, the techniques utilized are quick and simple, all equipment will be provided and it will not interfere with your everyday work.

So far we have had images sent in from as far away as Pakistan, Baluchistan and more closely from the UAE East Coast, Abu Dhabi, Musandam, Qatar and Bahrain, (from where there was an important recent sighting of a possibly pregnant female).

We have also recorded the first whale shark of the season from the Daymaniyats Islands, Oman, which was spotted and photographed by the dive masters at Extra Divers Al Suwadi. The dive masters managed to get a left and right side profile as well as a ventral shot allowing us to get a full ID of the animal and to determine that the shark was indeed a juvenile female. The dive center named her 'Ali-son' after the dive master who spotted the shark and we provided them with information about how to recognise her again so that their customers could compare any further sightings. As part of the Sharkwatch Arabia feedback to contributors, we are happy to do this for any dive center that is interested so that they can recognise the sharks that they are seeing and pass this on to their customers.

If you are a dive center or dive professional in the region and would like to get involved with Sharkwatch Arabia then please register online at www.sharkwatcharabia.com. A set of 3 fantastic posters featuring pictures by Warren Baverstock that form part of our "Spot the Difference" campaign, (shown in this issue of the EDA magazine), have been produced with the kind support of EDA and The Sharkquest Arabia Initiative and are now available to be distributed FOC to dive centers in the region. If you would like to be sent the posters for display in your dive center or dive shop please contact us at sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com or approach EDA directly.

Keep up the good work and thanks for all the support.

spot the difference

CALLING ALL DIVE CENTERS & DIVERS WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

JOIN US AND TURN YOUR DIVES INTO RESEARCH DATA IN AID OF WHALE SHARK RESEARCH!

VISIT SHARKWATCH ARABIA TO FIND OUT MORE
WWW.SharkWatCharabia.com

SharkWatch Arabia is looking for dive centers, divers, dive professionals and underwater photographers to be involved. We are looking for enthusiastic individuals who dive regularly to register and help to collect much needed data on whale sharks in the region.

DIVE CENTRES - Register interested Dive Masters or Dive Instructors on-line at WWW.SharkWatCharabia.com...

Picture Courtesy of Warren Baverstock / www.veridigital.com

Code of Conduct
for Whale Shark encounters by divers

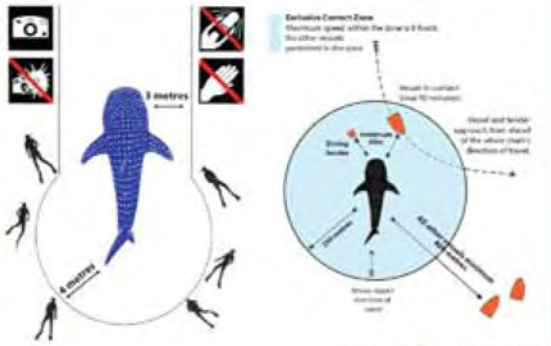


Image courtesy of www.environment.gov.ae

for tour guides and dive operators:

- All supervisors should be familiar with the Code of Conduct themselves and capable of providing a full briefing to clients on appropriate behaviour.
- All boats should have observers watching for marine wildlife while in motion, preferably equipped with polarized sunglasses.
- A maximum of 8-10 swimmers in the water at one time.
- All boats should approach whale sharks at a speed producing no visible wake.
- Swimmers should be discharged at a minimum distance of 30 m away from the shark.
- Boats should never block the shark's path, and should generally approach no closer than 50m from the shark.
- Avoid situations where multiple boatloads are interacting with the same shark. In these situations a maximum time limit (e.g. 20 minutes, or as agreed) for in-water encounters should be adhered to by each boat. After 20 minutes the guide from the 'in-contact' boat should pick up clients from the water and signal to the other boat that their interaction can begin.

for snorkellers and divers:

- Ensure you receive a whale shark interaction briefing from your tour guide or dive supervisor. Ask questions if points are unclear or confusing.
- Remain at least 3m away from the body of the shark at all times and 4m from the tail.
- Do not block the path of the shark.
- If duck-diving, maintain 3m distance. Avoid the under-surface of the shark as many whale sharks will 'bank' (turn onto their sides) as a negative behavioural response to approach from the sides or underneath.
- DO relax; many whale sharks are extremely curious and will readily approach swimmers if they feel unthreatened.

SHARKWATCH ARABIA

EDA جمعية الإمارات للغوص Emirates Diving Association

THE SHARKQUEST ARABIA INITIATIVE

IFAW International Fund for Animal Welfare

MARINE MEGAFAUNA FOUNDATION

spot the difference

CALLING ALL DIVE CENTERS & DIVERS WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

JOIN US AND TURN YOUR DIVES INTO RESEARCH DATA IN AID OF WHALE SHARK RESEARCH!

Foto I.D. Guidelines

TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS & SEND US YOUR IMAGES TO HELP BUILD A REGIONAL WHALE SHARK DATABASE...

DIVE CENTRES - Register your interested Dive Masters & Dive Instructors on-line at WWW.SharkwatCharabia.com...

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Do NOT under any circumstances use flash!!
- Approach slowly or wait for the shark to approach you.
- Do NOT touch the animal or get in it's way.
- Be careful NOT to get too close to the tail fin.
- Do NOT crowd the whale shark with too many people in the water at the same time.

Pictures Courtesy of Warren Baverstock / www.verzodigital.com

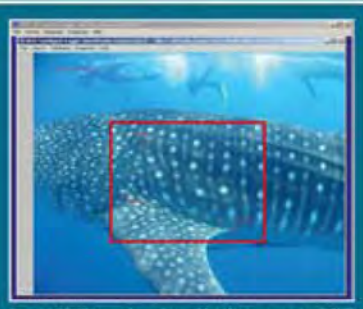
We Need You To Help Us With Whale Shark Research...

Whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) are the largest fish in the world and an iconic species. This area is a worldwide hotspot for whale sharks, with a high year-round density of juvenile sharks between 3-10m in length, and may contain a significant population of females (largely absent from other Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean hotspots).

In order to better understand the distribution and prevalence of gender, we need recorded sightings in order to establish a regional database that can lead to determining the overall status of whale sharks in the Arabian Gulf & Arabian Sea.

Sharkwatch Arabia has estblished an on-line database so that all divers & snorkellers can submit their pictures & data by filling out the on-line form on www.sharkwatcharabia.com and follow the instructions on how to send images. Pictures and can be sent by email to sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com.

As a dive center operating in waters frequented by whale sharks with regularity, we urge you to please promote this initiative and play a direct role by carrying cameras on board your dive boats at all times. Participating in this project will also greatly enhance the experience of your diving customer.



Screen shot of the I3S program showing the area of digital finger print recognition. (N/A/CS)

The computer program I3S (Interactive Individual Identification System) was originally developed for matching the spot patterns of ragged tooth sharks (*Carcharias taurus*), but Conrad Speed working with Mark Meekan and Corey Bradshaw in Australia, found the system to be effective for whale sharks. This program is now used as the standard research tool for whale shark identification and has allowed population estimates to be generated for the whale sharks off Ningaloo, Djibouti and around the Seychelles.

The vital area to photograph is between the forward edge of the pectoral fin, including the last gill opening, to the back tip of the pectoral fin flap. Make sure you photograph both flanks of the shark if possible.

Whale Shark ID Tips:

(A) The white spots on the shark's skin are individually distinct. Each shark has a unique spot pattern, helping researchers to identify individual animals - try to take photos of both the left and right flanks to help with scientific ID software.

(B) Make a note of the shark's sex (male= claspers) and try to take a photograph.

(C) Make a note or take photographs of any unique markings or damage to fins/tail.

SHARKWATCH ARABIA

EDA

SHARKQUEST ARABIA INITIATIVE

IFAW

SHARKWATCH ARABIA IS ARABIA'S DEDICATED WHALE SHARK & SHARK RESEARCH DATABASE in collaboration with the ARABIAN WHALE SHARK RESEARCH PROGRAM & SHARKQUEST ARABIA

VISIT WWW.SharkwatCharabia.com TO FIND OUT MORE

visit our Facebook page for regular updates... http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sharkwatch-Arabia/116357455044651

EDA DIGITAL ONLINE 2010 RESULTS

FEATURE **MARCELO MARIOZI – PHOTO@EMIRATESDIVING.COM**

It is that time of year again and we are very proud to give you this year's Digital Online Underwater Photography Competition results. But before you skip to the results we need to make good use of your attention and fill you in on all the details that were behind this year's event.

The official results were given on the 24th of June at the EDA Gala Dinner in the Emirates Towers – Godolphin Ballroom where the prizes were presented by EDA's Project Manager, Reema Al Abbas. Without EDA's support, this dream of mine would not have been possible and I would also like to thank Ibrahim Al Zu'bi, EDA's Executive Director and EDA's Board of Directors for their continued support.

This year's jury members made up a smaller group than that of last year's jury panel, but is made up of very experienced and most importantly, almost all members of the jury are very experienced underwater photographers with extensive experience in judging images and most importantly, judging them in the CMAS World Championships. These are some of the best in the world, brought to you by EDA.

REEMA AL ABBAS

Reema is a UAE national educated in London's prestigious Chelsea College of Art & Design, she immersed herself in the study of fine art, design and marketing by London's finest tutors and has participated in numerous group exhibitions, showcasing her paintings and has had several private viewings of her work. Her creativity is obvious as colours and textures excite her and her keen eye sees everything as an artistic composition. The rich marine life she encounters whilst diving, inspires many of her paintings.

MARCELO MARIOZI

Brazilian underwater photo instructor, has competed and organized underwater photo contests for over a decade, he has been to two World Championships and participated in workshops with the CMAS Audio Video Commission. He is the captain of the Brazilian Underwater Photo Team and is the voluntary EDA Photography Coordinator and recently won the Time Out Dubai 2010 Photo Contest.
www.uwphoto.ae

LUIZ FERNANDO CASSINO

Biologist, Dive and Underwater Photography Instructor, underwater photographer since 1997, 5-time Brazilian Underwater Photo Champion having conquered 4 category top-ten in World Championships, and was top-ten general in Spain Underwater Photo World Championship in 2005. He is one of the few photographers with the recognition of being sponsored by Nikon.
www.nikonbrasil.com.br/noticia2.htm

VASCO PINHOL

This Portuguese photographer has held the highest accolades in international events, he is now an Official CMAS Judge on underwater photo competitions, a good friend of mine and an inspiration.
www.slowimage.com

ESPEN REKDAL

This young Norwegian is a natural history photographer, videographer, writer and marine biologist, specialized in underwater stills photography. Though his extreme macro work has been a speciality in the past, he has branched out quite considerably over the past couple of years, to include wide-angle, wreck and deep-ocean-life to his areas of expertise. Artistic expression and simplistic compositions are trademarks of his photography. Many of his images are represented by several image agencies as well as his own agency Espen Rekdal Photography. He is the current CMAS World Champion and holds a style and technique that only few can.
www.espenrekdal.com

On the event itself, I am very proud of how everyone did, from the 3 judges present in last year's event it came to a common verdict: although we had fewer images this year, it was much better as we had better quality images and it proved a bit more challenging for us to vote, which is also very good. We had 8 contestants against last year's 13, and again, no one won more than one category and the overall results proved a very competitive event.

WIDE ANGLE | THIRD PLACE
MARC VILORIA

WIDE ANGLE | FIRST PLACE
AHMED EL GOUZA

UW PHOTOGRAPHY

The Macro category showed us some impressive results. I normally tend to think of this category as the most "democratic" one as even beginners can achieve great results with relatively inexpensive equipment. Of course this does not help alleviate the pressure on the more advanced photographers, and this year, Peter Mainka won it with his image of a nudibranch at 75.6 points, followed closely by Jonathan Clayton with 72.4 and Marc Viloria at 70.8 points.

The Fish category is normally where the most experienced diver shows some advantage most of the time as the subject is more than often difficult to approach in an artistic way. Domnique Zawisza won with a great image scoring 83 points, followed again by Jonathan Clayton at 77.8 points which was slightly ahead of Ahmed El Gouza with 75.8 points!

The Wide Angle category is what normally defines the champ, it is the most technically demanding category where technique and equipment comes heavily into play and the better photographer has the definitive upper hand. This year Ahmed El Gouza won it with a great scenic shot of the Red Sea scoring 82.4 points with Dijana Cetinic winning second place with 78 points and Marc Viloria winning third place with his image of 70 points.

Winning the Wide Angle category and scoring high overall in the 3 categories, Ahmed El Gouza is our overall gold winner this year, with Domnique Zawisza winning silver and Dijana Cetinic winning bronze. With two women and all new comers winning the 3 cups, it is a renewed energy for us to keep doing the Digital Online Underwater Photo Competition with the same, continuous passion! Enjoy the images!

DIGITAL ONLINE RESULTS	FISH	MACRO	WIDE	TOTAL
Ahmed El Gouza	75.8	58.4	82.4	216.6
Dominique Zawisza	83.0	68.2	62.8	214.0
Dijana Cetnic	68.0	55.2	78.0	201.2
Jonathan Clayton	77.8	72.4	49.8	200.0
Marc Anthony Viloria	55.4	70.8	70.0	196.2
Peter Mainka	59.4	75.6	60.2	195.2
Phillipe Lecomte	57.2	57.8	68.6	183.6
Karim Saad	0.0	37.6	64.8	102.4

WIDE ANGLE | SECOND PLACE
DIJANA CETINIC

MACRO | FIRST PLACE
PETER MAINKA

MACRO | SECOND PLACE
JONATHAN CLAYTON

MACRO | THIRD PLACE
MARC VILORIA

FISH | FIRST PLACE
DOMNIQUE ZAWISZA

FISH | THIRD PLACE
AHMED EL GOUZA

FISH | SECOND PLACE
JONATHAN CLAYTON

REDANG

UNDERWATER AND ISLAND **CHALLENGE 2010**

FEATURE **EN AHMAD FATHIL ABD GHANI – DIRECTOR, MOTOUR TERENGGANU OFFICE**

MINISTRY OF TOURISM
MALAYSIA

After the successful underwater and land photography competitions, Seashutterbug 2008 and Perhentian Underwater Challenge 2009, MOTOUR Terengganu Office, Ministry of Tourism have continued this program with a new name for this year's competition, the Redang Underwater and Island Challenge 2010, which included more challenges of the underwater world and the serene beauty of its island.

The focus on the name Redang was to make it an eco-tourism product, a speciality of Terengganu, whereas, 'Underwater and Island Challenge' was an expansion of the underwater and land photography competition to include other unique contests such as 'underwater painting'.

Once again, MOTOUR Terengganu Office chose to work hand in hand with Coral Malaysia, based on this NGO's experience in organizing underwater activities over the last five years.

It is hoped this cooperation which has prevailed for the last four years, will continue as a program to raise awareness to the general public, of the closeness and interdependency of the conservation of marine heritage and the tourism industry.

UNDERWATER WINNERS

1st PLACE
Photo by: Mohd Shukri Shafie
Camera: Canon Power Shot G10
Dive Site: Tanjung Tokong
Caption: Starry Blenny

2nd PLACE
Photo by: James Ong Fung Chuan
Camera: Canon G10
Inon Strobe With Macro Lense
Dive Site: Marine Park
Caption: Christmas Tree Worm

3rd PLACE
Photo by: Steven Chen Tic Loong
Camera: Canon Powershot G9
Patima G9 Housing
Dive Site: Che Isa
Caption: Anemone Shrimp

Putting Sharks in the Picture
MIDDLE EAST NATURAL HISTORY photography exhibition

SHARK AWARENESS PHOTO EXHIBITION | 2010

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS...

MIDDLE EAST NATURAL HISTORY photography exhibition

SHARKQUEST ARABIA & SHARKWATCH ARABIA are currently appealing for interesting and compelling images in order to compile a special educational exhibition of shark & whale shark photographs by international and regional underwater photographers.

Deadline
September 15th, 2010

Category 1 | Single Image

This category is open for submission of a single high resolution jpeg or PDF image that depicts sharks photographed in Arabia's waters; drawn from the general diversity of elasmobranch species, including animal behavior and natural history.

Category 2 | Shark Portfolio

This category is open for submission of 3 to 5 high-resolution jpeg or PDF images of any elasmobranch species photographed throughout Arabia's waters. As a portfolio, the images should either simply show sharks in their natural habitats or cover a range of subjects telling a story through a sequence of events and issues.

NOTE: Participants can submit images for either category, but not both. All submissions should be sent as high-resolution jpeg or PDF files to **sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com**

For more information, please visit the website **www.sharkwatcharabia.com**

pic by Warren Baverstock/verstodigital.com

PRIZES & AWARDS

for 1st & 2nd place winners voted by the public

THE SHARKQUEST ARABIA INITIATIVE

SHARKWATCH ARABIA
www.sharkwatcharabia.com

EDA
Emirates Diving Association

PIC FIX
YOUR IMAGES EXPOSED AND REFLECTED

FEATURE **MARCELO MARIOZI – PHOTO@EMIRATESDIVING.COM**

In this edition of Pic Fix, I would like to discuss a bit about our path in photography. Most people that buy a camera, be it an underwater camera or a "normal" one, tend to think of it as an end product, one that would solve all their needs to take photographs. But no matter how good or "pro" a camera is, it generally creates more problems, or generates more doubts than it solves.

Every photography course, underwater ones included, will start with a famous phrase: "photography is painting with light". The student's thought to this is "alright, let's skip to the important things". I know, it was just what I thought when I started, only after years of shooting did the concept really sink in. It is exactly that! Imagine a photographer and a painter…one uses paint, the other uses light; the first paints with charcoal, brushes and spatulas while the second uses lenses, tripods, filters, triggers…and finally both of them needs a medium to paint on. For the painter it's a canvas, for the photographer it's the sensor inside their camera.

And that's what cameras are, canvases. Very advanced and infinite (depending on your memory card) canvases. But one could argue that the most important thing, other than the vision of the photographer are the brushes and accessories that he uses to express his feelings through his art (this should be a whole new article!). And lenses, filters, and flashes for underwater photographers ARE definitely the most important part of his or her activity. It's their mastery in the use of such tools that will create, or more precisely "portray" a good image. And we had a night of these examples at the 2010 EDA Gala Dinner where the Digital Online results were presented.

In this edition of Pic Fix I will give my editing skills a well deserved break, and I will present similar photographs from several participants. EDA magazine readers will be able to draw their own conclusions.

In the image on the left by Karim Saad, you can obviously see the difference an external flash makes…and it makes a big difference on an otherwise very competent image, a good subject, nicely composed and focused. But underwater the need for extra "paint" is enormous and we need to carry our own colours, and for us that means an external underwater flash head, strobes.

In the second image above by Philippe Lecomte, you can see the difference the strobes made, but then other factors came into play, such as the subject orientation almost asking for a vertical format, distracting focus issues on the foreground, and a competing background…but still this image scored higher than the first, that's just how important "light" is to our "painting".

I will not post a third image here, but you can check Peter Mainka's winning image in the Macro category in our EDA Digital Online Photography Competition results. When we manage to put all the factors together we have a successful image that was easily recognized by our international jury.

Good shooting!

the Sharkquest Arabia Initiative presents

THE 2010 ARABIAN SEAS WHALE SHARK RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM & WORKSHOP

Putting Sharks in the Picture

The 2010 Arabian Seas Whale Shark Research Symposium and Workshop will be held in Fujairah hosted by LE MERIDIEN AL AQAH BEACH RESORT* this coming December, 2010 and will now stretch over 3 days with the inclusion of presentations about other general regional shark research, the shark fin trade issues and whale shark research updates. All guest speakers from last year will be invited along with the addition of other international shark specialists and NGO's.

This international event will host Guest Speakers from Seychelles, Australia, Djibouti, Maldives, Mozambique, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, United Kingdom, USA, Belize, Thailand, Philipines, Indonesia & the UAE. Guest speakers will also include regional Government Officials from Ministries and conservation authorities, CITES and the IUCN's Shark Specialist Group.

This year's theme is entitled "Putting Sharks in The Picture" and features the launch of a regional Arab World Shark awareness campaign and screenings of both Sharkquest Arabia documentaries ("Arabia's Whale Sharks - Gentle Nomads of the Arabian Sea" & "Arabia's Sharks - Life on the Edge") and a major Shark Awareness Photography Exhibition by reknown regional and international photographers.

BECOME A SCIENTIFIC DIVER!!! December 11th, 12th & 13th, 2010

pic by Warren Baverstock/verstodigital.com

PRESENTATIONS

DAY 1 | GUEST SPEAKERS
WHALE SHARKS
A full day of presentations by key guest speakers from UK, Australia, Seychelles, Oman, Mozambique, Maldives, India, Pakistan, USA, Belize, Thailand Philipines, Indonesia, KSA & UAE

DAY 2 | GUEST SPEAKERS
SHARKS
A full day of presentations by key guest speakers from IFAW, IUCN Shark Specialist Group, CITES, SHARKALLIANCE, Ministries & regional Conservation authorities.

DAY 3 | WORKSHOPS
SHARKWATCH ARABIA presents 2 workshops on our regional database & research photography

WORKSHOPS EVENT

Putting Sharks in the Picture — NATURAL HISTORY photography exhibition
SHARK AWARENESS PHOTO EXHIBITION | 2010

SHARKWATCH ARABIA
www.sharkwatcharabia.com

Attend free workshops on
'Shark Fin ID & Monitoring of the Fin Trade'
'How to Support Our Regional Shark Database'
& 'The Basics of Research Photography'

THE 2010 ARABIAN SEAS **WHALE SHARK** RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM & WORKSHOP

DECEMBER 11th, 12th & 13th, 2010

FREE ADMISSION & SPECIAL HOTEL RATES

If interested to attend, please RSVP to **sharkquestarabia@yahoo.com**
For more info. contact Jonathan Ali Khan on 00971 (0)50 7986743

Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort rooms are available on a first come, first served basis. SO BOOK NOW!

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A pair of Blue Ringed Angelfish

MY TRIP TO DIVE MALAYSIA WITH EDA
REDANG! REDANG! REDANG!

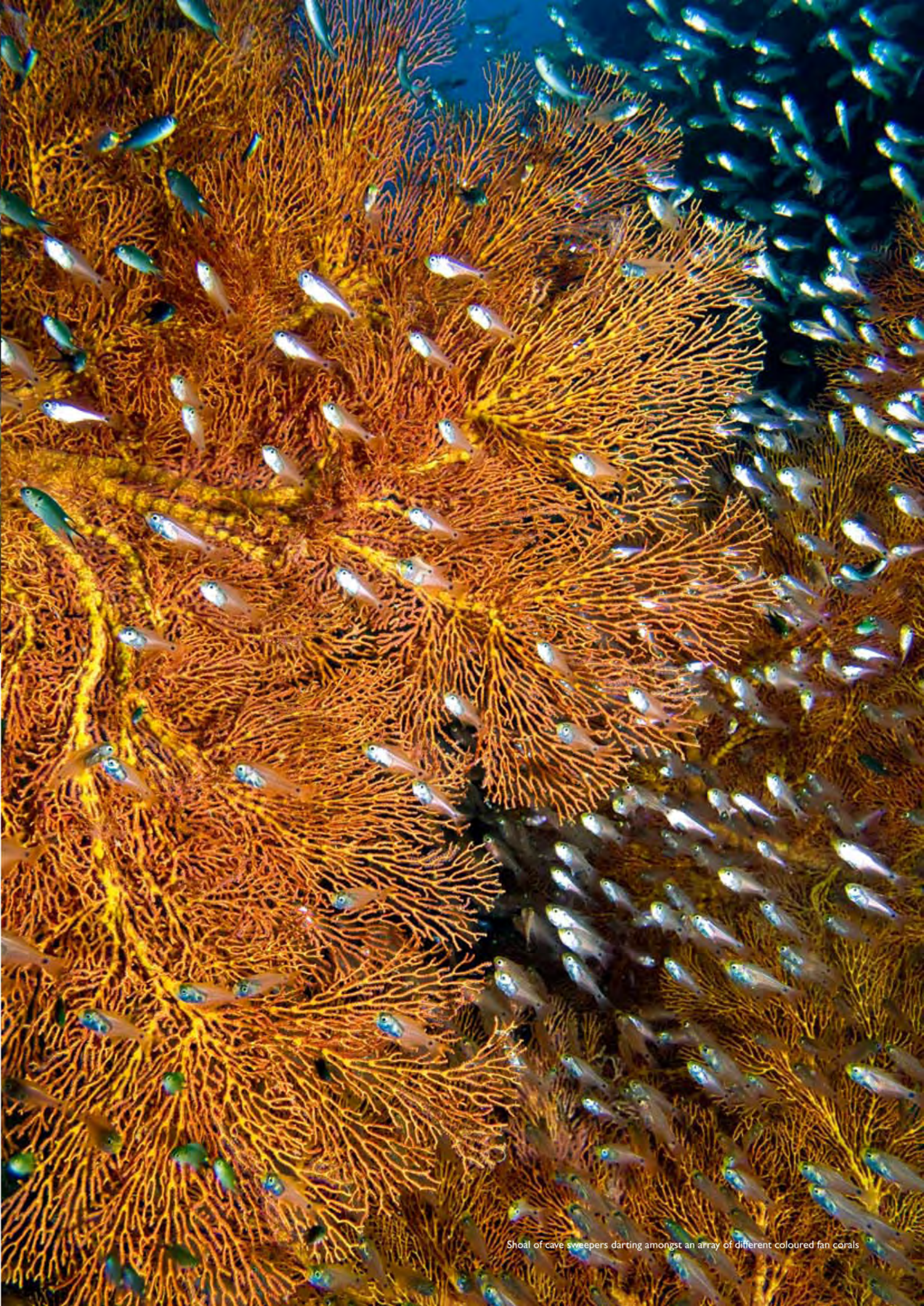
FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **WARREN BAVERSTOCK – WWW.VERSTODIGITAL.COM**

Standing in my hallway looking at my luggage all packed and I know that at that moment that the rest of the EDA team are well and truly on their way to Malaysia. On my way to the airport four hours earlier I received an urgent call reporting a problem that needed my immediate attention. With no other choice I had to turn around, put plans on hold and take care of the problem that I was faced with. Three hours later and with the problem resolved, I called the EDA team to find them checking in and only minutes away from boarding the plane. I had been watching the clock as my problem had slowly resolved itself, but by the time I had made this last call to the team, I had resigned myself to the fact that there was no way I was getting on a plane and flying to Malaysia. With confirmation that the flight had been especially arranged for this trip and that there was no way that it could be extended I picked up my luggage and headed upstairs to unpack. Minutes later and unexpectedly my phone rang and upon answering I was pleasantly surprised when Mr "A" from Malaysia Airlines introduced himself informing me that he could help me. Hanging up after a brief conversation I started to smile – "be at the airport for 3.30pm tomorrow with all of your documentation and I will see if we can't get you on that flight".

Sitting in a small fibreglass speedboat, skimming across a pond like sea heading towards Perhentian Islands (pronounced Perhen-TEE-AHN) I cannot believe that I am finally in Malaysia when the odds were so heavily stacked against me. I had done exactly what Mr "A" had said and as a result, he (Malaysian Airlines) had done everything possible to get me on that flight the next day. Not only that, he had personally made it his mission to ensure that I got on that plane. As the boat drew closer to the coral fringed islands I could see the dense forestation leading down to the shoreline where gigantic boulder like rock structures separated the forest from the shoreline. Finally, pulling up to our resort where the team had already spent one night I exited the boat and walked up the jetty toward the resort. Within 30 minutes I was in a basic but well air conditioned room and with my housing assembled, strobe batteries charged, I settled down to catch up on some much needed sleep.

The next morning and after a quick briefing at the resorts dive centre, we set off for our first of three dives, 'Sugar Wreck' – a ninety metre long cargo vessel which sank in 2000 and lying on her side in eighteen metres of water. As the team and I began to descend an impressive shoal of Yellowtail barracuda followed us down the side of the wreck. Unfortunately arriving at this site quite late in the morning meant that we were not the only divers to have dived this site that day and so with visibility at around 8 metres, capturing the impressive shoals of fish that inhabit this wreck was not going to be possible. Back at the resort and with a new cylinder ready on the boat, I re-hydrated and while we completed our surface interval I wondered when I would get to see the amazing rich diving environments that I had read so much about. The next dive site was to give me a taste of just what I was looking for.

Standing on the bow of the boat, peering down into the turquoise water and while looking at the large coral structures surrounded by a collage of movement I do my final kit checks and I'm ready to dive Tanjung Besi. With just a rash-vest and shorts, the water is a perfect temperature and as I descend I take in the impressive view of healthy



Shoal of cave sweepers darting amongst an array of different coloured fan corals

coral broken up by the odd towering sponge. With twenty metres visibility in the distance I can see large shoals of snapper and parrotfish sweeping over the sloping mass of stag horn and table corals. Breaking up the collage of movement, swim pairs of, stunningly coloured Coral rabbitfish and Blue Ringed angelfish. Descending deeper down onto this site and as a hawksbill turtle moves off the reef disturbed by our bubbles another great shoal of parrotfish sweep up onto the reef. Losing track of time, my dive computer reminds me that its time to carry out a safety stop and as I look out over a healthy coral reef from behind an anenome I think to myself – what a great view these clown fish have.

Our last dive of the day is considered one of the best dive sites around the Perhentian Islands. Terumbu Tiga or better known as Tiger Rock is a dramatic dive site boasting giant boulder formations with plenty of corals, barrel sponges and gorgonian fans. First to greet us as we descend is a hawksbill turtle who seems oblivious to the flashes of our cameras. Further into the site and looking down onto the sand a blue spotted stingray forages for food while out in the deeper water a large shoal of trevally watch and wait for us to move on. This dive site offered plenty of marine life but being late in the afternoon, visibilities were quite poor and with light fading fast the fish that we were expecting were just not there. Back in my room and with three dives down and with one and a half days of diving left on the schedule I reviewed the photographs of the day and felt a little nervous that I may not get the shots I was looking for. The next morning and it was time to leave Perhentian Island and make our way to Terengganu which would give us access to the next island that we would dive – Redang!

Leaving our mainland hotel nice and early we arrived at Merang jetty where our hosts for the day, Coral Redang Divers were waiting for us with their dive boat. We boarded the vessel and within forty-five minutes we arrived at this amazing island paradise. With clear blue skies, crystal clear water and perfectly clean coral sand we jumped off the boat and waded out of the sea onto a pristine unspoilt beach. Thirty yards in front of us was the dive centre and as we arrived, we were greeted by the centre's dive team and made to feel very welcome. Within five minutes everyone had signed the normal dive liability paperwork and been shown where the cylinders and weights were. For the members of the team that needed equipment, they were looked after effectively and quickly and it was not long before we were all listening to our dive master, Matt Cdc, giving us our first dive brief of the day. The first dive sites name was the Tajung Tokong located on the northern tip of the island offering the promise of densely coral covered sloped reef with lots of fish. Thirty minutes later and everything that Matt had covered in his dive brief was no exaggeration. With 20 metres visibility and the early morning sunlight behind me, I descended down onto the perfect reef where I was joined by literally thousands of fish. Scattered amongst the lush green stag horn coral, Black-margin Bull's-eye fish floated effortlessly, secure in the confines of their coral shelter while inches above, fish fed on the small particles of food floating in the current. As the team descended in the distance I watched another shoal of parrot and rabbit fish sweep over the reef, momentarily stopping and feeding on the patches of algae growing on dead coral before heading off into the distance. As they move on I turn around and bracing myself, a swarm of Yellow-banded fusiliers swarm up the side of the reef and surround me momentarily blocking my view of the other divers. As an inquisitive pair of Blue Ringed Angelfish followed me across the reef I come face to face with a large crocodile fish keeping perfectly still hoping not to be seen. As I scrutinised the gaps and crevices of this site looking for macro critters I was rewarded with a nice frogfish and mantis shrimp encounter. Slowly as the topography of the reef changed, massive boulders replaced the gently sloping reef creating a perfect environment for gorgonian corals. With the current picking up I found myself kneeling behind a towering boulder staring at a small shoal of Royal Damsels taking refuge around a perfect yellow and orange fan coral. Moving around the boulder and with the dive coming to an end I spend my last minute at 18 metres photographing a densely packed shoal of cave sweepers darting amongst an array of different coloured fan corals. Grabbing as many photographs as I can my dive computer finally sounds the alert and it's time to ascend. At the surface everyone has a look of excitement on their face and as our boat sped back to the dive centre, we all exchanged our experiences of this amazing dive.

With new cylinders hooked up and our surface interval complete, Matt proceeded to tell us what to expect on our next dive. As the boat pulled up to Steven's Stone, a dive site made


Yellowtail Barracuda shoaling on Sugar wreck - Perhentian Islands


Shoal of hungry Parrotfish sweep over the coral reef of Tajung Besi – Perhentian Islands


Percula Clown fish with a perfect view over Tanjung Besi - Perhentian Islands

up out of four small reefs surrounded by sand, Matt jumped in, did a quick current check and signalled that all was fine. As we all entered the water and descended down onto the sandy bottom I could see that over the last ninety minutes visibilities had deteriorated slightly turning the water slightly milky. Although this was quite a small dive site, Matt's decision to bring us to this reef was because on each of the small coral covered pinnacles were many different types of fish all competing for space. On one of these special pinnacles, busy Percula clown fish worked hard to protect their host while all around, a shoal of Ring-tail Cardinal fish competed for shelter from the relatively strong current. On another of the pinnacles, a pair of Sebae clown fish looked slightly more relaxed as they rest on their giant large carpet anenome observing a shoal of Moluccen Snapper. Scattered around on the sand lay blue spotted stingrays while around the base of the reefs, moray eels looked out of their crevices. Back on the boat and the team again congratulate Matt on his choice of dive site. Motivated by the appreciation of the EDA team, Matt announces that for our final dive of the day, he is going to introduce us to the stingrays of Redang on Paku Kecil.

Feeling slightly tired I lifted my BCD with new cylinder up onto the boat and boarded, ready for this last dive. Dropping down onto this site was more spectacular than the other dives of the day. Slowly descending down onto the reef at eight metres and it is difficult to see the other members of the team as there are thousands of Green Chromis feeding in the current. Moving away from the reef and leaving the massive shoal of fish behind I join the team and we slowly set off in search of the stingrays of Redang. Looking onto the reef I see a large shoal of mono's sheltering alongside batfish and squirrelfish in the shade of a giant boulder and as I approach to photograph them they disperse and disappear amongst the reef. Continuously keeping an eye on the sand for the rays I search for interesting things to photograph and as I lead the group I come face to face with a large hawksbill turtle grazing on a patch of soft coral. With the group still with the turtle I head on and it is not long before I come face to face with two very large Jenkins Whip rays. As I approach, my bubbles disrupts one of them making it swim aggressively around the area before settling down again. Thinking better of it, I choose to approach the more settled of the two rays and amazingly as I photograph it the curious ray nudges slowly towards me until the tip of it's nose touched the dome port of my camera. Face to face with this marvelous gentle creature I think of Matt's confident promise of a special encounter and as I think about the days diving I wonder whether my camera holds the evidence I need to support my article.


A camouflaged Crocodile fish on Tajung Tokong – Redang Island


Moluccen Snapper shoal seeking cover while a pair of Sebae Clown fish rest with plenty of space on a giant carpet anenome – Steven's Stone, Redang Island


Confidently gauranteed, a Jenkins Whip ray on Paku Kecil – Redang Island

Back at the dive centre and with my equipment all packed away, I thank Matt and the rest of the Coral Redang Diver team and mention that I would love to return and spend more time diving their world class dive sites. As the boat returned to Terengganu I thought how the Coral Redang Divers team had done everything they could to provide an amazing diving experience. The whole team were friendly, all spoke excellent English, the equipment was all well maintained and most importantly for me, they had plenty of 15 litre cylinders.

Three day's later and sitting in Kuala Lumpur airport, getting ready to return to Dubai I take another glance over the photographs taken during the seven dives (three hundred and fifteen minutes of bottom time) and I am fairly satisfied with the results. I made the right decision to stick with shooting with a mid-range lens and with favourable visibilities my nikkor 17-55 DX lens had been versatile enough to capture all of the images in this article. In reflection, with the odds so heavily stacked against me, diving in Malaysia may have been a whirlwind experience, but every dive provided me with two or three great publishable photographs and memories that I will never forget.

Will I return to do more diving in Malaysia? Most definitely – in my opinion Redang Island is a stunning place to go on vacation offering laid back diving on healthy coral reefs with a lot of stunning marine life.

I would like to say a big thank you to Mr "A" of Malaysian airlines – without his amazing customer service and support I would never have been able to dive in Malaysia. A big thank you to all of the team at Malaysian Tourism both in Dubai and Malaysia for making my stay a special one. Finally, a very big thank you to Matt Cdc at Coral Redang Divers for recognising our needs and giving me one of the best diving experiences ever.

Percula Clown fish protect their host surrounded by a shoal of Ring-tail Cardinal fish

Royal Damsels taking refuge around a perfect yellow and orange fan coral

DIVING FAM TRIP JOURNAL

A MALAYSIAN DELIGHT

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY ALLY LANDES **UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY** ANTONIE ROBERTSON

Redang Island looking out from Pasir Panjang (Long Beach)

MISSION:
Perhentian, Redang and Bidong in Terengganu – Malaysia

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Reema Al Abbas EDA Project Manager
Ralph Noblet Hotelier
Emmanuelle Landais Journalist
Antonie Robertson Professional Photographer
Warren Baverstock Professional Underwater Photographer and Writer
Marc Viloria Underwater Photographer and Diving Instructor
Kaw Fei Chin Middle East Division Manager – Discover Orient Holidays

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ORGANISER/TOUR OPERATOR:
Tourism Malaysia, Dubai
Discover Orient Holidays

GROUND HANDLER:
Hedaco Travel & Tours

DAY 1 | 13 AUGUST 2010 | PERHENTIAN ISLANDS

On this particular FAM trip EDA had been invited by the State of Terengganu to come and see what the diving in their region had to offer. This diving territory was unknown to us and we gathered the EDA team needed to set off on this new mission to discover diving in the Terengganu region. We have all heard how global warming is presently affecting the corals and it seems to be the same case everywhere at the moment with coral bleaching being inevitable. The people of the Terengganu region are worried for their underwater environment and do take the coral bleaching epidemic very seriously.

Well we went to go and check it out for ourselves and see what the diving had to offer in this region, which stemmed to be a truly remarkable little diving paradise.

The first haul of our journey with Malaysia Airlines was to Pulau Perhentian via KL and transit through to Kota Bharu. From there we caught a coach to Kuala Besut Jetty and took a 45 minute boat ride to Perhentian Island. The diving adventure starts from here and I'm going to take you through my suggestions for your next diving holiday as we found a little piece of heaven and have archived the memory in our unforgettable file. It is a 12 hour journey time from Dubai so you do need to take the remainder of the day to rest and get acquainted with your little island once you reach it.

ABOUT TERENGGANU

* Terengganu is situated in north-eastern Peninsular Malaysia, and is bordered in the northwest by Kelantan, the southwest by Pahang, and the east by the South China Sea. Several outlying islands, including Pulau Perhentian, Pulau Kapas and Pulau Redang, are also a part of the state. The state has a total area of 12,955 km². Its traditional way of life, vibrant cottage industries and fascinating cultural pastimes give the state its unique appeal. The islands of Redang, Perhentian, Lang Tengah, Kapas and Tenggol are jewels in Terengganu's crown.

The people of Terengganu generally speak Terengganese Malay, which is distinct from standard Malay and Kelantanese Malay, except for those in Besut district and Perhentian Islands who speak Kelantanese.

Terengganu is a sultanate and constitutive state of federal Malaysia. The state is also known by its Arabic honorific, Darul Iman ("Abode of Faith"). The coastal city of Kuala Terengganu which stands at the mouth of the broad Terengganu River is both the state and royal capital as well as the largest city in Terengganu.


You will not be the only dive boat at the dive sites on Perhentian

Terengganu did not receive many Indian or Chinese migrants, and therefore Malay cultural influences predominate. Traditional pursuits such as kite-flying contests, top-spinning contests, and traditional arts & crafts, such as batik and songket are still very much alive. The people of Terengganu have always had a reputation for being socially conservative and devout Muslims.

Colours of textiles surround the walkway of Pasar Besar Kedai Payang, a center of cultural shopping in Terengganu.

The major tourist attractions in the state include: Kuala Terengganu, the capital; Tasik Kenyir, a large artificial lake; Sekayu Waterfalls; Kuala Ibai Lagoons; Batu Burok Beach, Kemasik Beach, Rantau Abang, Marang, Chukai town and several offshore islands such as Pulau Redang, Pulau Lang Tengah, and Pulau Kapas, and the Pulau Perhentian, which attract beachgoers and snorkelers because of their picture perfect beaches. Many travelers find the relatively rural and tranquil atmosphere in the state conducive to a relaxing holiday. Terengganu has recently been known internationally as the host of the Monsoon Cup, which was first held in 2005 and then became an annual national sporting event. The event brought millions of ringgit of investment into the state from the private sectors and Malaysian Government. Tourists flocked to Kuala Terengganu and Duyong to witness this event, held during the monsoon season, which had previously been low season for tourism in Terengganu. *

ABOUT PERHENTIAN ISLANDS

* The Perhentian Islands (Pulau Perhentian in Malay) lay approximately 10 nautical miles (19 km) offshore the coast state of Terengganu, approximately 40 miles (64 km) south of the Thai border.

The two main islands are Perhentian Besar ("Big Perhentian") and Perhentian Kecil ("Small Perhentian"). The small, uninhabited islands of Susu Dara (Virgin Milk), Serenggeh and Rawa lie off Kecil. The Perhentians belong to Pulau Redang National Marine Park, which means that fishing, collecting coral and littering are strictly prohibited. Like Besut, people here generally speak Kelantanese Malay.

Both islands are fringed by white sand beach, and the reefs and crystalline water are host to a wide variety of coral, sea-turtles, jellyfish, small sharks and reef-fish. The islands' maximum elevation is approximately 100 m (328 ft) and they are uniformly covered in coastal tropical jungle, with few interior foot-trails and no roads.

Other than the owners and staff of the numerous cabin-style resorts that dot the islands (many of whom depart for the monsoon season), the islands' only permanent inhabitants live in a small fishing village on Kecil. With the exception of a single mainland-communications tower on each island, there are no structures taller than two storeys.

Scuba-diving, snorkeling, and swimming are the most popular tourist activities here. On most beaches, the water is shallow with lots of rays, cuttlefish and parrotfish. For diving, there are dozens of dive sites around both main islands, as well as several off-shore sites. Apart from these, you could also enjoy activities like camping, canoeing, fishing, jungle trekking, and banana boat riding. As for accommodation, most of it can be found on Perhentian Besar, the larger island. Hotels are usually aimed at budget travelers.

Summer 2007, 2 wind turbines had been installed, but are not connected due to storm damage, thus the island's electrical power is still provided by diesel generators. Electricity is 24-hour during high season. Fresh water is provided by springs. In this respect, the Perhentian Islands are prized by tourists as an 'escape' from the modern world.

The only access to the Islands is by boat from the fishing villages of Kuala Besut and Tok Bali. Local tourist operators run fishing boats and speed boats several times a day. *

PLACES TO STAY:

Perhentian Kecil is a backpackers party island and when accommodation is full, you will find backpackers sleeping on the beach. Accomodation on Perhentian Besar is where you should choose to stay, but accomodation on both islands is incredibly basic and you will not find 5 star accommodation here. You can check accommodation reviews on TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) to check up on your choices.

Website Link for accommodation on the islands: www.myoutdoor.com/perhentian/
Our Accommodation: Arwana Perhentian Resort (www.arwanaperhentian.com.my)
Tour Operator Recommendation: Perhentian Island Resort (www.perhentianislandresort.net) or Coral View Resort (does not have its own website)


End of the beach on the stretch of Teluk Dalam


Arwana Perhentian Resort Dive Centre








DAY 2 | 14 AUGUST 2010 | **PERHENTIAN ISLANDS**
DIVE NO: 1
DIVE LOCATION: TEMPLE OF THE SEA
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 23.9m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★
This is a pinnacle dive teaming with life. The viz was a breath of fresh air after having done a dive in Dubai the week before with only 3m visibility. This dive site is resident to a three legged turtle, the reason being was unclear but definitely nice to see if you get the chance. My group was on the other side of the pinnacle busily absorbed in photographing and filming when the other group spotted it. The dive site is densely populated and you are guaranteed to see schools of snappers, giant puffer fish, box fish, blue spotted rays and moray eels. It was a good start to our diving itinerary.

DIVE NO: 2
DIVE LOCATION: D-LAGOON
VISIBILITY: 15+
DEPTH: 11.3m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★ ★ ★
This shallow afternoon dive is located on the edge of the small island and was a wonderful finale to the day for me. I had asked if we could see bumphead parrotfish in the region and I had been told that they were very rare to see. Well they heard my request and a small herd of around 30 (they are the underwater version of the buffalo beasts) of bumphead parrotfish came swooping towards us and I managed to swim within their grazing path and get some great film footage. They are magnificent to see and such large fish, it is sometimes daunting being among them. Their parrot beaks make an incredible sound as they swoop down and bite into the coral and barnacles on the rocks, it really is incredible to experience them. This site is also resident to 3 huge jenkin's whiprays that can always be found resting in their reef homes.

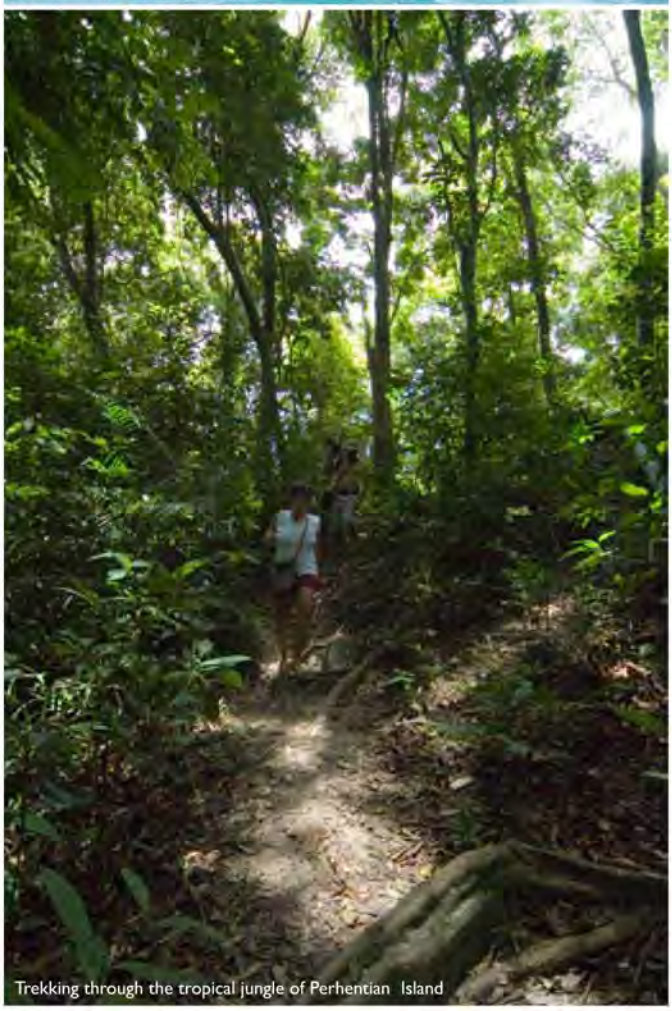
DAY 3 | 15 AUGUST 2010 | **PERHENTIAN ISLANDS**
DIVE NO: 3
DIVE LOCATION: SUGAR WRECK
VISIBILITY: 10+
DEPTH: 17.6m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★ ★ ★
This wreck is 90m in length and has plenty of angles to get a glimpse of different marine life. Schools of juvenile barracuda and yellow snappers are found hanging about at the top of the wreck. Keep a good eye out for nudibranches as they are on all the dive sites, they're not easy to find though. Watch out for scorpion fish as they are about and keep a good look out under the crevices for bamboo sharks. We managed to find one very small juvenile and they are said to be common on most of the dives around Perhentian.


The EDA team with some of our wonderful Malaysian hosts

There was another dive done in-between this and the next dive, but I chose to sit it out as I had caught a cold the first night over and my sinuses were playing up, so Reema and I decided this was a good cue to go and explore the island while the sinus tablets kicked in. Michael, our tour operator from Hedaco was going to do a trek across the island and through the jungle with Kit Choong and asked if we wanted to go with them and it couldn't have been better. We wouldn't have seen as much without him. It's definitely recommended to do a trek. There are fruit bats and squirrels on the island and during our trek through the tropical jungle we got to see a large monitor lizard. We did our trek in flip flops and it provoked no problems, but make sure you take mosquito repellent with you as we were a main target.

To start our trek, we took a boat around from Arwana Perhentain Resort and started the trek from the beautiful white sandy beach of the Perhentian Island Resort. They have one of the most beautiful beaches on the island.


The team off to do another dive


Trekking through the tropical jungle of Perhentian Island

View from the Perhentian Island Resort Jetty

DIVE NO: 4
DIVE LOCATION: TERUMBA TIGA
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 18.7m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★★★★
This is a nice dive and quite different in topography from the other dives we have done so far as it is made up of very large boulders. There are lots of barrel sponges and whip coral everywhere. We got to see quite a few blue spotted rays and were greeted by a hawksbill turtle on entering the site that made the headlines with our paparazzi team. Different species of damsel fish and anemones are found in abundance on all the sites and are a pleasure to see if you particularly like them as much as I do. A particular favourite you will see on all your dives is the skunk clownfish.

DIVING VERDICT:
There are 17 dive centres on the islands and they each take out a maximum of 30 divers a day during the high season which cater more to discover scuba diving courses and open water courses. You will not be the only dive boat at the dive sites, meaning the sites are heavily populated with newbie divers. The dive sites are lovely though and there is plenty to see. The coral bleaching will not affect your diving and the water temperatures are coming back down so there is hope for coral recovery.

Mattt our fab divemaster at the Coral Redang Dive Centre giving us a dive brief

Coral Redang Dive Centre

DAY 5 | 17 AUGUST 2010 | **REDANG ISLAND**
ABOUT REDANG ISLAND
* Redang Island, locally known as Pulau Redang or just "Redang" is one of the largest islands off the east coast of Malaysia. It is one of nine islands, which form a marine park, and which offer snorkeling and diving opportunities. Access is from Merang or Kuala Terengganu on boats operated by the resorts; there is also a small airport with services operated by Berjaya Air from Singapore (Seletar Airport) and Kuala Lumpur (Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport).

The island is also an important conservation site for sea turtles. Previously, the indiscriminate economic exploitation of turtle eggs had caused fewer turtles returning to nest on the island. This has led the Terengganu state government to set up the Koperasi Setiajaya Pulau Redang in 1989, a cooperative aiming to develop and manage socio-economic programmes that could improve the livelihood of Pulau Redang locals without endangering its natural resources.

The Pulau Redang archipelago comprises Pulau Redang, Pulau Lima, Pulau Paku Besar, Pulau Paku Kecil, Pulau Kerengga Kecil, Pulau Kerengga Besar, Pulau Ekor Tebu, Pulau Ling and Pulau Pinang. Pulau Redang is the biggest of all the islands in the Marine Park, measuring about 7 km long and 6 km wide. Its highest peak is Bukit Besar at 359 metres above sea level. The boundary of the Pulau Redang Marine Park is established by a line linking all points 2 nautical miles (3.7 km) from the shores of Pulau Redang, Pulau Lima, Pulau Ekor Tebu and Pulau Pinang. The other nearby islands of Pulau Perhentian Besar, Pulau Perhentian Kecil, Pulau Lang Tengah, Pulau Kapas and Pulau Susu Dara are also gazetted and protected as Marine Parks. Today, only the bigger islands like Redang, Lang Tengah, Perhentian and Kapas have resort facilities for visitors. The management of Marine Parks primarily involves protection of the sensitive marine and terrestrial ecosystems by controlling the impact from human activities. These include waste & pollution management and conservation of coral reefs and terrestrial habitats.

The 2000 film, Summer Holiday was filmed on the Laguna Redang resort, and a replica of the tea house now serves as the resort's gift shop. *

PLACES TO STAY:
Accomodation on Redang is much nicer than Perhentian islands that you cannot actually compare it and there are a few to choose from (www.myoutdoor.com/redang/Accommodation).
We experienced a day at: Coral Redang Island Resort Sdn Bhd (www.coralredang.com.my)
Tourism Malaysia Recommends: Berjaya Redang Beach Resort (www.berjayahotel.com) a 5-star accommodation on the island

What a little paradise Redang is. You must book a year ahead as this is one place you must stay at for your diving/island holiday! It was unfortunately full everywhere and we had to stay on the mainland. This is where the white, silky sandy beaches are and is considered one of the most beautiful islands in Malaysia. The Coral Redang Island Resort is lovely and the Coral Dive Centre and dive staff here are really fantastic.


Coral Redang Dive Centre kitting up area

Mattt our dive master was a real pleasure and a great guide clearly in-love with his ocean. He asked if he could also take his camera down when he saw all our equipment! We were clearly there to captivate their underwater world and take our time about it and too right, what a wonderful underwater world they have!

The dive centre receives yearly updates on the coral bleaching in the area from the government which is great for us to see and understand the drastic change in percentages. Water temperatures had reached up to 32°C the previous month, but had come down to 30°C during our visit and expected to continue declining. Standard temperatures in the area are from 25-28°C, which has caused concern to everyone in the Terengganu region.

On Perhentian Island we were told that there are 9 dive centres and they take out 30 divers a day during the high season, most of which are discover scuba or open water courses. Redang have fewer dive centres and it is very obvious that there are monitored and fewer divers per day, the dive sites are peaceful and undisturbed. When you reach a dive site, you are the only boat there, it really is first class! There is coral bleaching everywhere, but this does not affect any of your dives and with the water temperatures coming back down and continued monitoring, they should be able to recover.

DIVE NO: 5
DIVE LOCATION: TANJUNG TOKONG
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 23.4m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★★★★★
Paradise! What a fantastic dive. There is so much to see, you get a little of everything! You can only do this dive in the mornings as it is located right by a turtle reservation and they keep divers away from it in the afternoons for the turtles that come to nest on the beach in the evening.

DIVE NO: 6
DIVE LOCATION: STEVES STONE
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 18.3m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★★★★★
Another great site. This site is hard to find if there is a bit of a current and you don't descend straight away, but we were lucky to have no current and were relaxed getting all the cameras in. This is made up of several different small reefs and is great fun as there is so much to see. We got to see a few moray eels, a very large stonefish, cleaner shrimps, pipe fish of different sizes, active blue spotted rays and the list goes on. A fantastic dive for photographers!

DIVE NO: 7
DIVE LOCATION: PAKU KECIL
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 16.2m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★★★★★
We managed to slip in a third dive and just didn't want it to end. This was an awesome finale to our days diving and located straight in front of the resort. Keep your eyes open to the top of the reef as we spotted a black tip reef shark, so they really are there. The end of this dive turned out to be a drift dive and thoroughly enjoyable with the layout of the reef. We saw a large pipefish, a hawksbill turtle eating within a garden of whip coral, two huge stingrays and so many other wonderful things. Redang was definitely the highlight of this diving trip and a destination I will come back to and explore more of.

DIVING VERDICT:

There are dive centres at every resort on the island and the dive sites that Redang has to offer are spectacular, as are the beaches. This really is first class diving. We dove with Coral Dive Centre and Mattt our divemaster was a superb guide. The dive centre is perfectly equipped and the staff is excellent. If the rest of your family don't dive, but love to sunbathe on beautiful beaches, snorkel and explore then Redang is perfect for everyone.

DAY 6 | 18 AUGUST 2010 | BIDONG ISLAND

ABOUT BIDONG ISLAND

* Bidong Island is one square kilometer in area and is situated off the coast of Terengganu, Malaysia in the South China Sea. Bidong Island is accessible from the coastal town of Merang.

On April 30, 1975, the Vietnam War ended with the evacuation of the American Embassy and the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese Army. Millions of people tried to flee the new Communist rule in Vietnam. In May 1975, the first boat with 47 refugees arrived in Malaysia from Vietnam. They were called "boat people." However, the number of boat people fleeing Vietnam was relatively small until 1978. Bidong Island was officially opened as a refugee camp on August 8th, 1978 with 121 Vietnamese refugees. The capacity of the camp was said to be 4,500. Another 600 refugees arrived in August and thereafter the arrival of boats from Vietnam was a near daily occurrence. By January 1979, there were 18,000 Vietnamese on the island and by June 1979 it was said to be the most heavily populated place on earth with about 40,000 refugees crowded into a flat area hardly larger than a football field.

By the time Bidong was closed as a refugee camp on October 30, 1991, about 250,000 Vietnamese had passed through or resided in the camp. With the closing of the camp, the remaining refugees were repatriated back to Vietnam. The refugees strongly protested their forced repatriation. A total of 9,000 Vietnamese were repatriated between 1991 and August 28, 2005 when the last refugees departed Malaysia for Vietnam. In 1999, the island was opened to tourism. It has regained its former pristine beauty and many former refugees have revisited their old home. *

DIVE NO: 8
DIVE LOCATION: HERITAGE ROW/VIETNAMESE WRECKS/JETTY
VISIBILITY: 20+
DEPTH: 18.6m
TEMPERATURE: 30°C
RATING: ★★
This dive was done through Seamonkey Merang Divers whose main shop is based at the Sutra Beach Resort & Spa on the main land who are familiar with all the dive sites around Bidong Island. This particular site is an underwater gallery where the statues are replicates of the original pieces made especially for divers. It's a vast dive site and it gives a different angle on diving and was fun to see, although you are there purely to see the gallery as there is not a lot else in respect to marine life. We got to see a school of juvenile barracudas and we were entertained by a small school of shrimpfish. They started off in a small cluster and then evolved into a larger mass while they posed to have their photographs taken. They are always a fascinating species to see.

And this sadly comes to the end of our diving trip. If we could have prolonged it, we would have as there is so much more diving to do. To get back to KL we had a stopover in the Terengganu capital. From Sultan Mahmud Airport there is an hours flight back to KLIA with Malaysian Airlines and then you make your transit back to Dubai unless you decide to do a mandatory stopover in KL for a few extra days.

DIVING VERDICT:

All the other dive sites around Bidong are worth seeing from the briefings we were run through and you need a good week to dive all three islands. Make sure Redang is the last island you stay at and dive from for the perfect finale!

TRIP SUMMARY:

The landscapes are gorgeous, the skies are out of this world and the diving is a world of unlimited exploration and beauty. You will not be disappointed and on returning back to your real world, you will dream and plan of the next visit in search of the magic once again.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Bring Mosquito Repellent with you. It can be purchased on the island resort shops if they have it in stock.
- Make sure to take sinus decongestant tablets as these are impossible to find if you catch a cold.
- **Best time to go:** The monsoon season peaks between November and March every year. You can expect more rain and rough seas and most resorts are typically closed from the end of October through to the end of February. Peak season is between July and August and prices rise accordingly. During off-peak times, rates are negotiable. You may need to book well in advance during peak times and for public holidays and weekends. Note that most budget resorts do not accept bookings and handle guests on a walk-in basis only.
- The Malaysian currency unit is Ringgit (RM) and sen, where 100 sen equals one Ringgit. Remember to convert your foreign currency or get cash at an ATM at the airport before heading to the islands as they will not accept any other currency.
- Tipping is not mandatory but is widely practised. RM2-RM5. Most hotels and restaurants include a 10% service charge in all their bills.
- Bring plenty of drinking water on your dive trips as most dive centres will not supply any.

REFERENCES:

* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

TRULY LOST **IN PARADISE**

FEATURE RALPH NOBLET – HOTELIER **PHOTOGRAPHY** ALLY LANDES
UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY ANTONIE ROBERTSON

Time seems to have paused. I do not know anymore what date it is, how long we've been gone and by now the exact time and day has become irrelevant. There is only the here and the now.

The breeze in my face is fresh, the South China Sea is dark blue and infinite, the scattered Islands are all unique in their shapes and sizes, each covered in lush jungle vegetations of a thousand greens, the sun is shining, the sky is deep blue and the clouds are huge, majestic and of the most striking white I've ever seen.

We are on a speedboat taking us to the main land. A group of nine people not having known each other a few days back when we first met between planes, now all feel as if we have been friends for ages.

Our team was put together to visit one of Malaysia's provinces called Terengganu. Some are here to provide the pictures, the films, some to look at things with a journalistic or marine experts point of view. We all come from Dubai and yet we are all of different nationalities.

I am a French citizen, hotelier and most certainly not a writer. Yet, my role is to write about the various hotels we stayed in or had the opportunity to visit during our tour within the region as well as my overall impression of the destination.

All the others have already worked on their articles, taken great pictures for the magazine issues, and here I am on that boat, not a clue as to what or how to write because at this point the world in its raw beauty surrounds me 360 degrees. It is literally taking a hold of me and nothing else matters…

I am not sure if that was on day 4, 5 or 6 of our trip. But now I am back in Dubai, in front of my computer, under pressure to produce my article to meet the deadline, and I still haven't written anything until now because fifteen days later, anytime I think back, the first thing that automatically re-surfaces is the environmental beauty in which I was privileged to immerse myself in.

Terengganu is located on the North Eastern coast of Malaysia and boasts an impressive 244km long stretch of sandy coastline beaches. It offers many traditional experiences to enjoy combined to its unique heritage with warm and friendly people everywhere.

Based on my short visit and various interactions with the local tourism ministry and hotel managers, I sense that there is a global regional and federal commitment to develop this region as a first class tourist destination.

Objectively speaking, there is a lot to do to bring this region to that level when you consider certain inconsistencies from resort to resort in terms of accommodation, service and overall standards. But they know where they are, they do not pretend to be what they are not (yet), they are proud, humble, committed and they have a plan.

Furthermore, they have what's most important, great people with un-spoilt genuine hospitality combined to a world-class location in terms of island diving.

We had the chance of staying in 3 different hotels and locations during our tour. We also visited 4 other properties and my observation is that whether on the main land or on the Islands there is choice. Indeed, whether your motivation is purely diving or backpacking, or a low budget or deluxe stay, or various combinations, you have an immense

amount of choice and the prices are very reasonable at every level and in each category.

The 2 main islands are Perhentian and Redang, each of them offering some of the best diving in the world. My first impression was the laid-back atmosphere and the natural beauty of both islands. But I must admit a preference for Redang.

We went for a whole day of diving to the Coral Redang Island Resort. The location is outstanding, the staff is welcoming and the dive center and all diving sites first class on all fronts. The hotel has a range of 40 detached, semi-detached chalets and standard rooms to choose from. Each chalet or room has air conditioning, fan and hot water heaters; they are large and well furnished. But most importantly, the beach at the front of the hotel is absolutely stunning. Meals are good, offering a decent selection of Asian and Western foods. www.coralredang.com.my

In order to give you some perspective of all the properties I have experienced on the islands, this resort was by far the very best. I would rate it, on a purely hotel product standpoint as a 3 star by international standards.

I am sure there are even better hotels available around of course, but overall this is where I believe there is room for improvement in that destination.

In summary, and to present you with a fair idea as to what to expect in general, cons are the rooms and especially the bathrooms, which are generally, tired. Pillows and beds a bit hard, and there is a lack of dining/shop options (that is if you plan to stay for over 5 days). However, in my view, ultimately the pros significantly outweigh the cons as you will find spectacular emerald islands dotting the seas with powdery white sands, azure waters, naturally formed coral gardens and spectacular marine life. Inland lies lush tropical rainforests, dazzling waterfalls, flora and faunas of exotic species and other natural wonders. You will enjoy some of the best diving and snorkeling of your life and get the relaxed atmosphere and rest in your hotels with friendly staff.

For those of you simply looking for a quiet, peaceful and cultural retreat, I would certainly recommend the Aryani Resort on the main land. With just 27 villa units that ensure exclusivity and privacy, this unique resort offers the finest collection of genuine Malay culture and artifacts. The rooms and amenities are excellent, modern and yet designed to immerse you in authenticity. Their rates are extremely good considering the quality of the place and you can enjoy their traditional spa treatments. I recommend a drink at their bar on the beach at sunset. For further information you can contact them on sales@thearyani.com.

If you choose to spend one or more nights before flying away from the Kuala Terengganu airport in the state capital, then you will find a good choice of hotels at your disposal such as the Felda Residence with 101 rooms and the tallest building in the city, www.plantationresorts.com.my. You also have the 245 rooms at the Primula Beach Hotel located at the heart of the city, www.primulahotels.com. I would recommend the luxurious 5 star Ri-Yaz Heritage Marina Resort & Spa with its 97 garden and river view guest rooms & suites. The Resort is set in its own secluded surrounding, which offer a tranquil ambiance, outstanding accommodation and exciting sailing facilities. It is also the home of the internationally acclaimed Monsoon Cup www.ri-yazheritage.com.

Through your travels in the Sultanate of Terengganu, you will also see traditional Malay coastal villages, domestic animals wandering in the fields and picturesque sunrises coming below the horizon. With swaying coconut and casuarinas trees lining the white sandy beaches, amidst the gentle breeze of the calm sea are just picture perfect. You will also see some of the world's finest craftsmen such as songket weavers, batik painters, woodcarvers and boat makers along your way. Time appears to stand still and everyone and everything seems to be moving at a slow and relaxed pace.

malaysia AIRLINES

To go to Malaysia I would suggest flying with their national company Malaysia Airlines. They provide direct flights to Kuala Lumpur from Dubai which takes less than 7 hours and have very competitive prices. You can transit directly with them to Kuala Terengganu Airport as they have daily flights available. That journey will take you about an hour including formalities.

It was my first time to fly with Malaysian Airlines and I must say that I will look forward to fly with them again. They are welcoming and very accommodating. For divers you will enjoy an extra 15kg for your diving equipment and the planes have ample legroom and comfort. The crews and airport staff are very competent, courteous and professional with a friendly attitude and I was impressed by the organization and orientation before arriving to KLIA. The airport and its facilities are simply excellent.

…so, after a week of moving around in dive boats and speedboats, diving, visiting hotels and the overall region, meeting local officials and numerous other people, I returned to Dubai and normal life.

When I got back, I had the surreal impression that I had been away for months. I had really lost track of time, forgotten about all these things that mark our daily lives and seem so fundamentally important, I had been one with my surroundings and truly lost myself in paradise.

I have never seen such beautiful clouds…

SELAMAT DATANG!

NATIONAL PARK OF PORT CROS (FRANCE)

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **PHILIPPE LECOMTE**

For many people, diving means "tropical seas". Let me show you a beautiful heaven in the mediterrnean sea called, "Port Cros".

The National Park of Port Cros first opened in December 1963 and became the first underwater national park in Europe with 700 ha of land (main island plus 3 little islands), and 1300 ha of sea protected area. The park is a jewel of the "Côte d'Azur" and the mediterrnean sea. There are lot of hotels, shops and restaurants in order to stay on the main island itself, or you can take a boat from the continent and spend the day resting or exploring the islands through trekking, kayaking, snorkeling or diving. In the park you will find many animals such as ground turtles, falcons, different sea bird species, snakes, bats, butterflies and many endemic plants and flowers to Provence.

At sea, naturalists and coast guards keep a very close watch for the protection around the island. Around the smalll island "La Gabiniere", mooring buoys are put in place for boats to anchor. In the park, fishing, camping, taking plants or animals, hunting, etc are not allowed. With this big effort, you will have the chance to sea dolphins, whales, sea turtles and the Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*). Almost extinct in the mediterrnean sea due to the spearfishing activity, the Dusky grouper is shy and very friendly. Around the island, fortunately he is very common and his habits are studied by a lot of naturalists coming from all around the world. With clear blue water all year round and with 15 to 25 metre visibility, the sea around Port Cros is a sea lovers paradise. All other sorts of mediterranean species can be found in Port Cros that are very rare in some other countries: moray eel, conger, octopus, john dory, european seabass, brown meagre, barracuda and even the moon fish can sometimes be common. For the macro life, there are also differente species of nudibranches, shrimps, crabs and much more.

My familly and I went back to France for a holiday in July. After not having been back for a few years, I had decided to take one day to dive in this wonderful place with my brother and a friend. The forecast that day had been excellent with no wind and very good visibility. After putting all the gear and 4 tanks in the boat, we headed out at 6 am toward the small island around the national park called, La gabiniere.

After a 45 minute boat ride, we arrived at our destination and were the first boat at the dive site. BCD on, mask, fins and into the sea of 23°C.

The visibility was 20 metres. During the descent there were no big fish. But as soon as you reached the sea bottom and you looked around, shapes appeared in the front, from the left and from the right. Here they were, the Dusky groupers. Their camouflage are very efficient from the surface. Big, medium, very big, all sizes are possible to see in the water of the park. After playing and taking some shots of these amazing predators, we explored the area and found some nudibranches eating seaweed. Under a rock, a big moray eel kept watch. Further along a cliff, some brown meagres swam with a school of white seabreams. Quite common in the mediterranean sea, different species of white seabreams are found here. Their silver colour with black stripes or black dots are pretty and they are not scared of human contact as in other places where they are fished for their delicate taste. Under a rock, my brother showed me two little red scorpion fish hidden among little corals. Already 50 minutes go by and our first dive is finished.

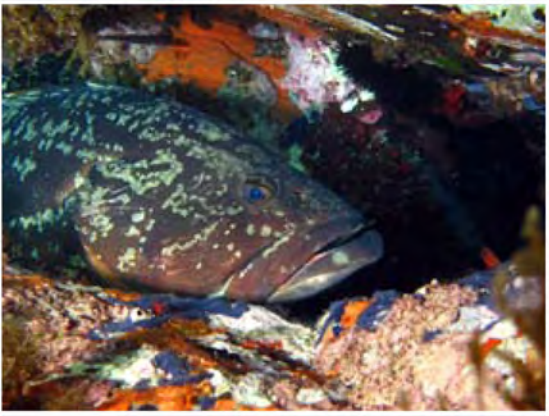
Back at the boat, we decided to move to the other side of the island to do our second dive at a depth of 12-16 metres with a good side of sunlight.

As soon as we had attached our boat on one of the mooring buoys, we saw two diving boats coming toward us full of divers. Fortunately, they moved on the offshore side of the island.

After finishing our little breakfast, we were ready to start our second dive. This side was very different compared to the other side, with cliffs and big rocks. Sandy areas, rocks and neptune grass meadows were everywhere. This grass is endemic to the Mediteranean sea and can cover a huge area. This is a good place for juvenile fish and other species to hide in order to escape any predators. During the dive, we saw some big dorados swimmig slowly and trying to eat some seashells in the sand. Suddenly between two rocks, we saw an octopus couple mating, their breeding ritual looked like that of a dance. Without disturbing this amazing event, we swam to shallower water to finish our dive and saw three big European seabass swimming slowly above our heads.

These two dives were fantastic and I had forgotten how beautiful the mediterranean sea was and how it can give you some great souvenires.

www.portcrosparcnational.fr



MARICIBAN ISLAND, PHILIPPINES

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY © **GORDON T. SMITH**

For further information contact Josie Evans via e-mail at pisadive@yahoo.com or by phone +63 92 73 71 39 37

I frequently travel a lot on my own on business and also on many of my dive trips, generally because when I have free time to travel my dive buddies don't!

Recently I had a rather impromptu trip to the Philippines which despite being unplanned turned out to be another one of these gems that occur in my life from time to time.

Work rules my life and these days I have very little opportunity to go diving here in the UAE, never mind overseas. So after several conversations with a charming young lady about how good the diving is around Mariciban and Bonito Islands just off Batangas in the Philippines, I decided to go ahead and check it out for myself.

The nine hour flight to Manila is tiring, and given a 03:45 departure from Dubai to arrive in the late afternoon plays havoc with the internal body clock. Fortunately I managed a few hours sleep. On arrival at Manila airport, everything was pretty straight forward and very soon I was in my hotel.

The following morning, a car had been arranged for my transport to the boat near Batangas. Remarkably after escaping the metropolis of Manila the drive to Batangas was pretty straightforward and it only took two and a half hours to reach Mabini (west of Batangas), where we then boarded a large banca (outrigger boat) for the 30 minute journey to Maricaban.

Mariciban Island Resort is not a five star luxury palace by any means, with no electricity during the day, no air conditioning, no flushing toilets and other amenities that one normally takes for granted. That being said, the hospitality and good wholesome food makes up for it and once you stick your head under the water… WOW!

On the first dive just off Bonito Island I was blown away by the clarity of the water, totally incredible with 20M+ viz, not something I am used to with diving around the UAE. It reminded me of my first dive just north of Jeddah in the Red Sea way back in 1986, pristine corals and clear clean water.

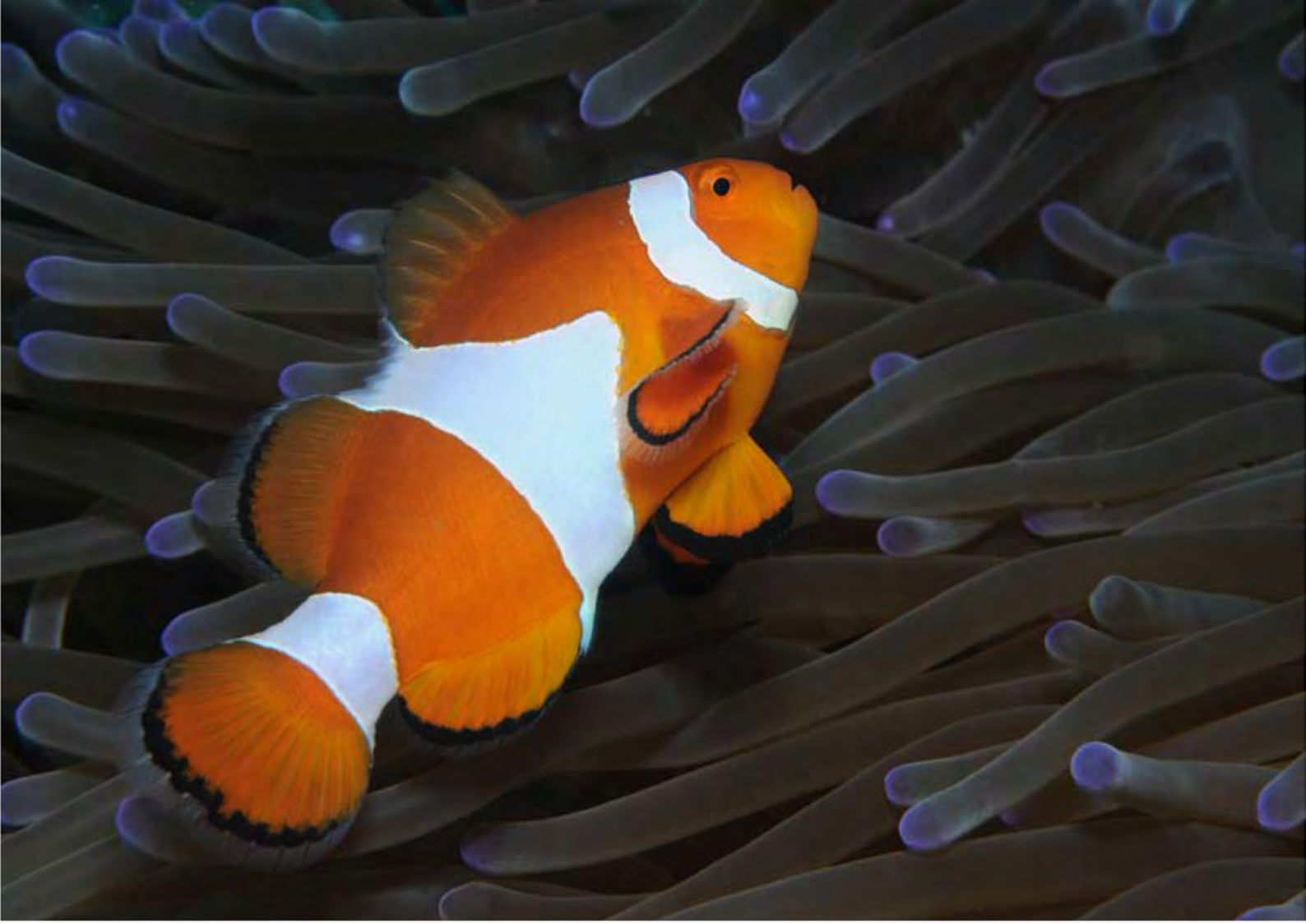
There were three of us diving including the owner of the resort (Josie Evans) who had a list of critters to find for me to photograph, the top of which was of course nudibranchs, and she did not fail me.

The colours of the feather stars and corals was astounding, and the fish life totally awesome, plus ten different species of nudibranchs on one dive!

I had only brought one lens with me to use underwater and that was my 60mm micro attached to my D300. However the water was so clear that using my 105mm lens would have been possible with no problem, and plenty of wide angle opportunities in some areas too.

Next time…and that will not be long…there is that elusive mantis shrimp and a few other critters that I need to photograph.

I will let the photos speak for themselves, this is a nudibranch paradise and I barely scratched the surface with a few days diving. The great thing about this resort is the low impact on the environment because it is back to basic living, that being said the amount of divers is minimal and that low impact is reflected by the quality of the reefs and marine life around the island, even straight off the beach.



HOW TO BE **GOOD ON AIR**

FEATURE **ASSER SALAMA (TDI/SDI/CMAS INSTRUCTOR)** PHOTOGRAPHY **T. TIMOTHY SMITH**

What accounts for huge differences in air consumption? Even divers with fairly similar size and experience have different consumption rates, which couldn't be attributed only to differences in fatigue or stress levels.

Since different people have different lung volumes, different metabolisms and different genes, the point here is that there is no ideal air consumption rate. In other words, you shouldn't be ashamed of using more air than your buddy.

So let's forget all about gauge competitions. Large air reserves are useful only when they translate into longer, safer or more enjoyable dives. But if all you're after are bragging rights to having more air left over at the end of the dive, maybe you're missing the point behind diving in the first place.

Having a lot of air by the end of the dive is not the ultimate proof of diving excellence that we sometimes make out. However, improving your air consumption often leads to longer (and maybe deeper) dives. Here are some tips to help lower your consumption rate:

MASTER BUOYANCY CONTROL

Stop moving underwater; just freeze. If you start to sink, then you are not neutrally buoyant. This is because your BCD is not adequately inflated. Believe it or not, adjusting your buoyancy by using the BCD is far less air-consuming than adjusting your depth level in the water column by finning and/or hand movements.

ADJUST WEIGHTING AND ACHIEVE HORIZONTAL TRIM

Normally a diver using a bit more-than-needed weight with a conventional BCD won't be able to achieve a perfect trim. The weight around the waist pulls down, while the air cells in the BCD pulls up at the chest area. Compensation for poor trim takes effort, which translates into more air consumption.

Minimize the "hole in the water" made by your body. The less water you have to shove aside, the less energy and air you have to consume. One way is to reduce the amount of weight you carry because extra weight needs extra BCD inflation to lift it. A more inflated BCD pushes aside more water.

Another way to shove aside less water is to trim your body in a horizontal position so that your legs are following through the hole made by your shoulders and not enlarging it. Many divers do, in fact, swim with their heads up and fins down. Wings and integrated weight pockets help achieve good trim, but you can still get the right trim and weight while using a conventional BCD.

On the other hand, underweighting is as bad as overweighting. Too little weight means that as your tank empties and becomes more buoyant, you will increasingly have to struggle to stay down, resulting in more work and harder breathing.

GET FITTER

The fitter you are, the quicker your heart returns to the normal rate after exercise. If you have to swim a long distance to reach a dive site, or carry your kit a long way, you will start the dive at elevated breathing and heart rates. Actually some virgin dive sites like Ras Abu Galoum north of Dahab, Red Sea, Egypt, require a 90 minute camel ride! After a period of exercise, a fitter person returns to the normal breathing pattern faster than a less fit one.

PRACTICE FINNING

Do lots of slow lengths instead of few rapid ones. This will help the right muscles develop. Try and do as many lengths underwater as you can, and take into consideration that underwater finning is not the same as surface finning. There are plenty of underwater kicks to choose from. However, the majority of divers use either the frog kick or the flutter

kick. An excellent piece of advice is to use the "modified" flutter and/or frog kicks. The "modified" version involves bending the knees 90 degrees and doing smaller, slower lengths.

Finning is a lot like driving a car; speeding up increases fuel consumption. Finding a moderate finning pace helps you maintain a relaxed rhythm and keeps your muscles and heart rate working at maximum efficiency. Finning faster will get you there quicker, but will cause you to use your air much more quickly. And at the end of the day, we're not in a hurry. Diving is meant to be a relaxing activity. It's not a race.

BREATHE DEEPLY

It's somewhat against basic logic. Why does breathing deeply make a limited air supply last longer?

Some divers think that breathing from the top half of their lungs is a means of saving air. They take short, shallow breaths but unfortunately they end up wasting air instead of saving it. Actually what they're doing is influencing more carbon dioxide build-up. And believe it or not, it's the need to blow out excess carbon dioxide not the lack of oxygen that urges you to take the next breath.

Short, shallow breaths leave your lungs filled with excess carbon dioxide. As this carbon dioxide urgently needs to get out, you're obliged to take another breath although you don't need the oxygen yet.

DO NOT SKIP BREATHE

On the other hand, don't exaggerate the slow, deep breaths to the point of hyperventilation, which can lead to fainting due to suppressing the urge to breathe. The best breathing pattern is to take slow, deep inhalations followed by slow, complete exhales. Do not play with your breathing pattern. Breathe normally and don't hold your breath. It is worth noting that in some circumstances when perfectly-neutral buoyancy is ultimately important, for instance when you're hovering over some fragile corals for a photo, this best breathing pattern may disturb your buoyancy. You'll have to change it for a short while and take shorter, quicker breaths.

CHECK YOUR GEAR

Check your equipment for air leaks. Often, you can't see the leaks yourself. A little bubbling from your tank's O-ring or your BCD inflator can sum up to several bars/PSI's over an hour's dive. A free-flowing octopus occasionally dumps air a lot faster. Detune it if you can, and mount it with the mouthpiece facing down. Don't detune your primary regulator though. Detuning your primary regulator leads to increasing your breathing work. This increase leads to an elevated carbon dioxide production rate, which leads to accelerating your breathing rate and eventually translates into wasting more air.

Some virgin dive sites like Ras Abu Galoum north of Dahab, Red Sea, Egypt, require a 90 minutes camel ride! After a period of exercise, a fitter person returns to the normal breathing pattern faster than a less fit one.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asser Salama is a mechanical power engineer, an MBA degree holder, and a TDI/SDI/CMAS instructor. He teaches both recreational and technical diving courses and organizes trips all over the Egyptian Red Sea. Asser is the current president of Red Sea Shadow, the largest online SCUBA diving community in Egypt. He enjoys writing and software development. Email Asser at asser@red-sea-shadow.com or call him on 0020 11 255 4533.

IMAGES AT A GLANCE

EDA MEMBER: PHILIPPE LECOMTE

ABU DHABI BREAKWATER

spot the difference

CALLING ALL DIVE CENTERS & DIVERS

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

JOIN US AND TURN YOUR DIVES INTO RESEARCH DATA IN AID OF WHALE SHARK RESEARCH!

VISIT SHARKWATCH ARABIA TO FIND OUT MORE
WWW.SHARKQUESTARABIA.COM

Did you know that every whale shark has a unique spot pattern, like a human fingerprint, allowing each individual to be identified? **Sharkwatch Arabia** is the first research project of its kind on whale sharks in the region and we are attempting to research many aspects of whale shark ecology within the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman

- *How many whale sharks visit our region every year?*
- *When do they visit and why?*
- *Are they predominantly male or females?*
- *What is the most likely place to encounter a whale shark?*

These are some of the questions that we are trying to answer at **Sharkwatch Arabia**; can you help us answer them?

Sharkwatch Arabia is looking for dive centers, divers, dive professionals and underwater photographers to become involved. We are looking for enthusiastic individuals who dive regularly to register and help to collect much needed data on whale sharks in the region.

The concept is very simple:

1.) Enrol free of charge by emailing us at **sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com**
2.) Keep a monthly note of the number of whale sharks observed, the dive duration and when and where you dived
3.) Every month Sharkwatch Arabia will send you a very simple form to fill in by e-mail and please upload your images.
4.) Return the electronic form to **sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com**

By participating in **Sharkwatch Arabia** you will be helping to gather vital information on our regions whale sharks. Let's work together to protect our regions sharks and turtles.

You can find out more information at **www.sharkwatcharabia.com** or e-mail us at **sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com**.

Picture Courtesy of Warren Baverstock / www.warrenbdigital.com

SHARKWATCH
ARABIA

EDA
Emirates Diving Association

SHARKWATCH ARABIA is Arabia's dedicated Whale Shark & Shark Database in collaboration with the ARABIAN WHALE SHARK RESEARCH PROGRAM + THE SHARKQUEST ARABIA INITIATIVE

www.sharkwatcharabia.com

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sharkwatch-Arabia/116357455044651

THE SHARKQUEST ARABIA INITIATIVE

IFAW

UPCOMING **EVENTS**

REEF CHECK TRAINING

Date and Schedule: 23rd, 24th and 25th of September
23rd (Thursday) from 6pm to 9pm
24th (Friday) from 9am to 5pm
25th (Saturday) from 9am to 5pm

INTERNATIONAL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday 25th September (tentative date and will be confirmed two weeks prior to event)
JBR Beach and Snorkel Cleanup

EDA ANNUAL CLEANUP – NOVEMBER 2010

East Coast – Friday 5th November
Abu Dhabi – Saturday 6th November

CORAL REEF BLEACHING – BASICS
INTERESTING LINKS AND RESOURCES

http://www.marinebiology.org/coralbleaching.htm

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/climate_change/climate_change_and_the_great_barrier_reef/what_is_coral_bleaching

http://www.reefed.edu.au/home/reefbeat/climate_change_and_our_great_barrier_reef

http://www.stanford.edu/group/microdocs/coralbleaching.html

COVER PHOTO:
BY **WARREN BAVERSTOCK**
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Photograph taken using Nikon D2Xs, 17-55 Nikkor DX, housed in a SUBAL underwater system (ISO 100 – f stop 11 @ 1/200s) – lit using Sea & Sea YS250 PRO's.

EDA
جمعية الإمارات للغوص
Emirates Diving Association

Chairperson Mr Faraj Butti Al Muhairbi

Vice Chairperson Mr Essa Al Ghurair

The Secretary General Mr Jamal Bu Hannad

Financial Director Mr. Khalfan Khalfan Al Mohiari

Head of the Technical Committee Mr. Omar Al Huraiz

Head of the Scientific Committee Mr. Mohd Al Salfa

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Heritage Department Manager
Mr Juma'a Bin Thaleth

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve, protect and restore the U.A.E. marine resources by understanding and promoting the marine environment and promote environmental diving.

LEGISLATION

Emirates Diving Association (EDA) was established by a Federal Decree, No. (23) for the year 1995 article No. (21) on 23/02/1995 and chose Dubai as its base. The Decree stipulates the following responsibilities for EDA.

- To Legislate and regulate all diving activities in the UAE.
- Ensure environmentally respectful diving practices in all EDA members.
- Promote and support the diving industry within the UAE by coordinating the efforts of the diving community.
- Promote diving safety in the commercial and recreational diving fields through standardization of practices.
- Promote and preserve historical aspects of diving within the gulf region and enhance environmental education to diving and non diving communities through EDA activities.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Kota Bharu	2,685	10,855
Terengganu	2,695	10,855
Penang	2,705	10,865
Alor Setar	2,705	10,895
Langkawi	2,785	11,065
Kuching	2,855	11,605
Kota Kinabalu	3,055	12,345
Miri	3,155	12,345
Tawau/Sandakan	3,255	12,565

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