

Inspiring People to Care About our Oceans Since 1995

# DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

WWW.EMIRATESDIVING.COM | MAGAZINE | MARCH 2011 | VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 1

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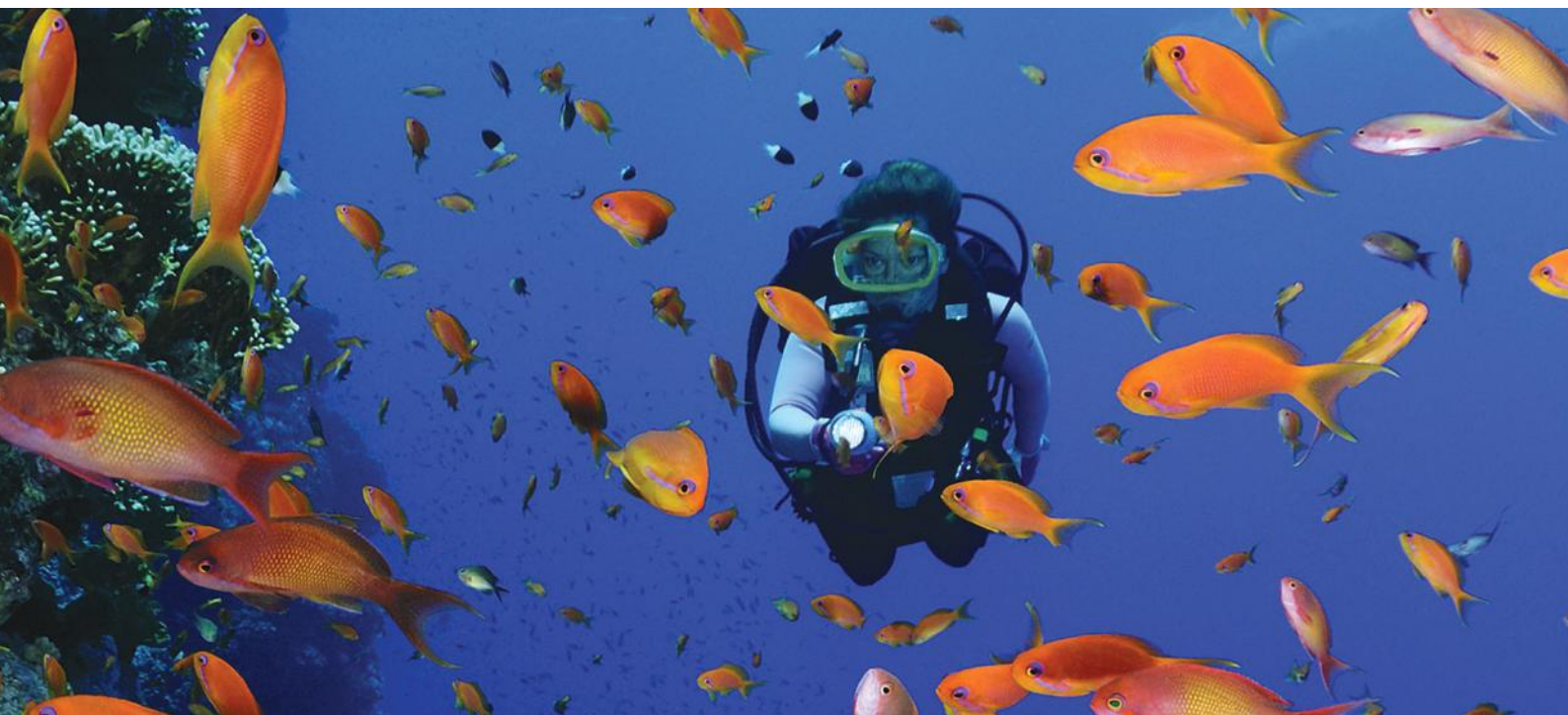
# ECOTOURISM DOES IT TRULY EXIST?



# 5th Dive Middle East Exhibition 2011

Held at Dubai International Boat Show  
Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi

**1 - 5 March**



## Key DMEX highlights 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 specialties including the diving history of the UAE
- Discover scuba diving, gain the latest knowledge and up-to-date diving techniques and skills required to explore diving

[www.boatshowdubai.com/DMEX](http://www.boatshowdubai.com/DMEX) [www.emiratesdiving.com](http://www.emiratesdiving.com)

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VENUE



A MEMBER OF



ASSOCIATED EVENT



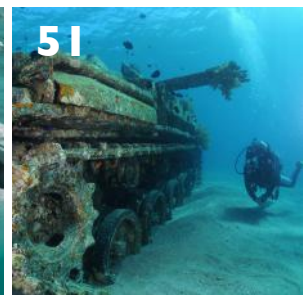
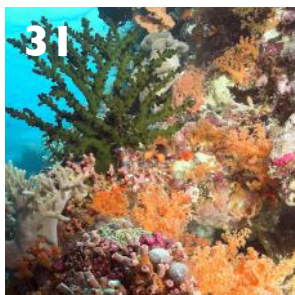
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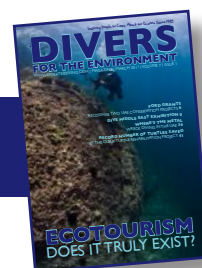
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### DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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 June 2011. Send all articles, feedback or comments to: [magazine@emiratesdiving.com](mailto:magazine@emiratesdiving.com)

### EDA COVER

PHOTO BY WARREN BAVERSTOCK





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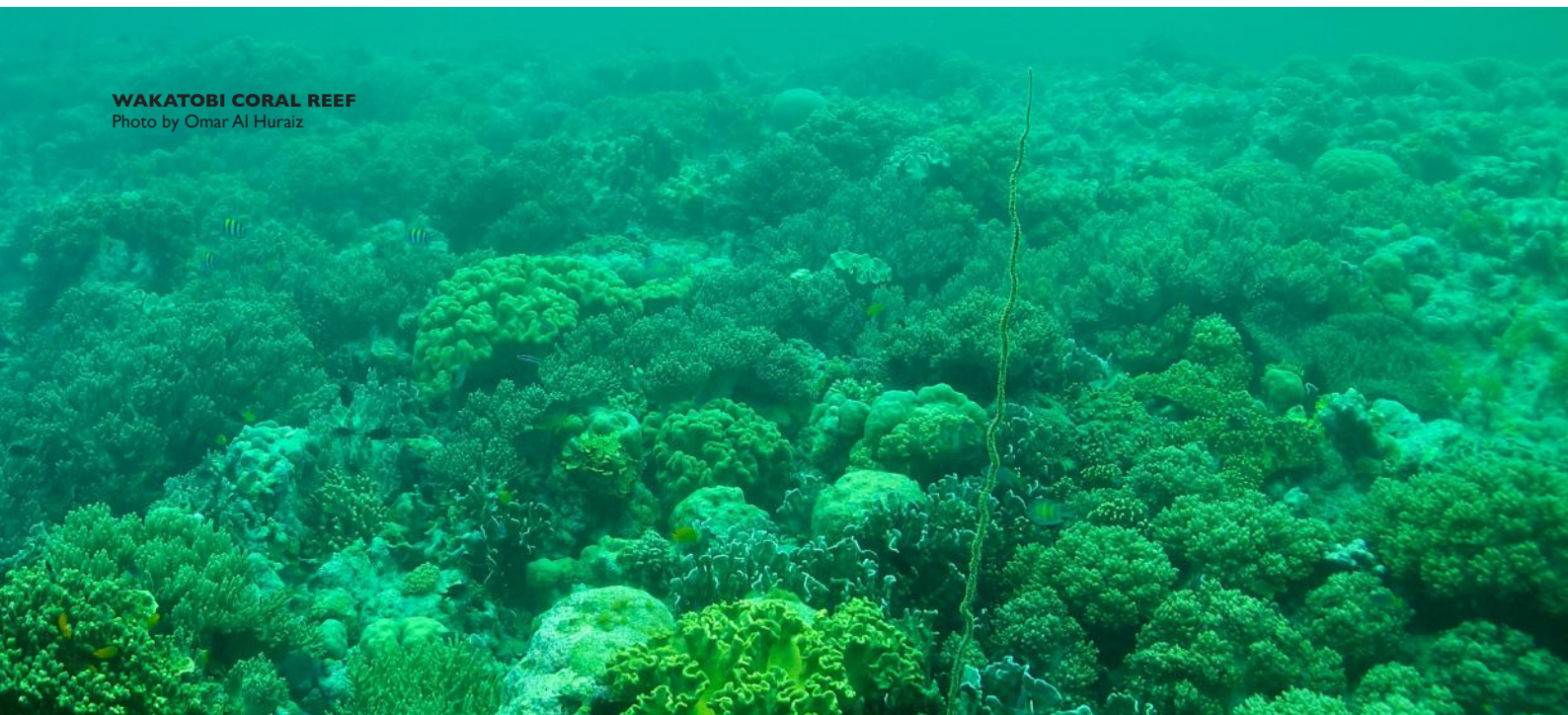
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**WAKATOBİ CORAL REEF**  
Photo by Omar Al Huraiz





# ECOTOURISM

## DOES IT TRULY EXIST?



IBRAHIM N. AL-ZU'BI  
EDA Executive Director

There is still an ongoing debate about the definition of Ecotourism and Eco-diving and if it really does exist in the world today. If you have a company who claims that they have a green brochure and use soy-based ink; can they claim to be an ecotourism company? Ok, great effort but sadly no, you can't. There's more to it than that, much more.

'Greening' such an industry for tourism is no easy feat, especially when you have the task of convincing businesses and board members that conserving our environment whilst going about our daily jobs is not perceived as a 'luxury' anymore. With tourism being the main source of income for a lot of countries, we need to ensure that it can be a sustainable source, especially if the tourism depends on a healthy and undamaged eco-system. We should always bear in mind the impact that tourism has on the environment and the local communities and how much the community is actually engaged in the decision making in ensuring that the tourism money is benefiting the environment and the development of the community itself.

There is a great potential for a huge boost in Ecotourism, and our latest EDA dive trip to Wakatobi is a true case study of Ecotourism in a nutshell. In January this year, EDA took a dive team to the Wakatobi Dive Resort in Indonesia, where we were exposed to the way in which businesses can develop local environmental management plans to preserve the marine environment, benefit the local community and make money all at the same time! With diving becoming a multi-million dollar industry for global tourism; with divers travelling to various sites world-wide to enjoy exploring underwater worlds, I hope that Wakatobi will no longer be a minority example of how Ecotourism should really be done economically, socially and of course environmentally.

It was such an inspiration to us that we wrote an article which you can read in this issue. We would love to hear your views on how you define Ecotourism so make sure you share them with us and send your article in!

With DMEX just around the corner, we are proud to announce that 2011 will see our biggest DMEX participation ever! Stay tuned and make sure you visit us at DMEX (stand H3-2) as EDA will be announcing some great and exciting new initiatives and projects for 2011. We're looking forward to seeing familiar faces as well as meeting new ones!

Other great news for us this year; we are proud to announce that we have won a FORD Grant for the third consecutive time in as many years. This recognition is important for us as it shows our work here at EDA is recognized by a jury of individuals and organizations from diverse backgrounds across the Arab world.

You will also find in this issue exclusive news and special offers to our members from our dive centers and clubs in the UAE. The diving industry are in for a busy 2011! We are also glad to see that free diving is getting more popular in the UAE. We will have monthly courses running, with certified Free diving Instructors, so make sure you come and get involved. This is an exciting time for the diving industry and EDA will make sure it has the official platform and our full support.

With EDA being the official Training Reef Check Facility in the UAE, we have allocated a lot of space for our Reef Check News! With input given by Reef Check, and with EDA being one of the main Reef Check partners, we hope you will enjoy the updates and research about the condition of the coral reefs in our seas!

I want to thank Angus Carlisle, Chairman of Desert Sports Diving Club for asking for more articles about 'wreck diving' in the UAE. I am sure you will enjoy reading his article along with other wreck diving articles and news in this issue! We assure you there will be more news and exciting updates in our future issues, so make sure you check them out.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our EDA members who continuously share their insightful diving experiences and underwater pictures with us. Your insights and articles are imperative in recommending when and where to go diving as well as what to look out for on your trips. We hope your passion and enthusiasm continues and you send us news about your next diving adventures, and we look forward to seeing your next batch of waterworld snaps!

I do hope you enjoy reading our first Divers for the Environment issue of 2011. We have a busy year full of activities and events waiting for you. The EDA team is working tirelessly to have another successful year and we're looking forward to seeing you all in DMEX 2011, and of course all of our other EDA events.

Happy reading and safe Eco Diving!

*Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi*





# FORD GRANTS RECOGNISE TWO UAE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

- Efforts to preserve coral reefs and reduce illegal trade of wildlife receive funds to help accomplish their missions
- \$1.1 million granted since 2000 to more than 130 local grass-root level environmental initiatives



DUBAI, UAE, 7 February, 2011 – The Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grants today awarded two projects from the UAE aimed at the preservation of the UAE's coral reefs and the fight against the illegal trade of animals in the region.

Murad, director of Sales at Ford Middle East. "Through the Ford Grants and the legacy of Henry Ford who was in the business of not only creating good products but goodwill, we continue to give back to our local communities where we serve."



The Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grants is a grass-root level programme that has offered US\$1.1 million in grants to over 130 Middle Eastern environmental projects since its launch in 2000.

In the Middle East, the initiative has seen support from various governmental and non-governmental environmental authorities including the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Emirates Wildlife Society, the Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED) and most recently, the UNESCO Doha.

An independent panel of nine jurors consisting of academics, as well as experts from environmental ministries and agencies choose the winning projects that demonstrated a well-defined sense of purpose, a commitment to maximizing available resources, and a reputation for meeting objectives and delivering planned programmes and services.

Each year, the Ford Grants make a total of US\$100,000 available to individuals, community and non-profit groups that have projects currently running in the areas of preservation of the natural environment, environmental education and conservation engineering. The programme is open to applicants from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

The Emirates Diving Association, with its project Reef Check, received US\$9,000 from Ford to fund training programmes for volunteers and for the collection of data during the reef check surveys in Al Aqah, Rul Dibba and Al Faqeet around the East coast. The Reef Check project not only collects scientific data important for the conservation of the marine environment but also provides volunteers information in layman's terms to understand the status of the UAE's coral reefs and know the main threats. With this project, it is also hoped that the local communities will have increased awareness on the state of coral reefs and the need to conserve them.

The illegal trade of animals, particularly a large number of sharks and shark fins which are being exported from Yemen to parts of Asia, has been rampant largely due to lack of awareness. As such, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) embraced the responsibility to provide training to enforcement officials and to facilitate cross-border cooperation to address the problem.

IFAW embarked on the project Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Middle East to which a grant of US\$7,000 has been awarded in order to engage participants from the environment, fisheries and customs agencies in a specialised shark protection workshop. Through the various trainings and workshops, IFAW aims to increase the level of knowledge of the species and awareness of the conservation threats thereby influencing the community to reduce illegal trade activity and ultimately protect the ecologically-important animals.

"Both projects that received grants from Ford emphasise the community's role in protecting the environment. We commend the determination of EDA and IFAW in pursuing extensive awareness campaigns through training programmes and workshops," said Hussein

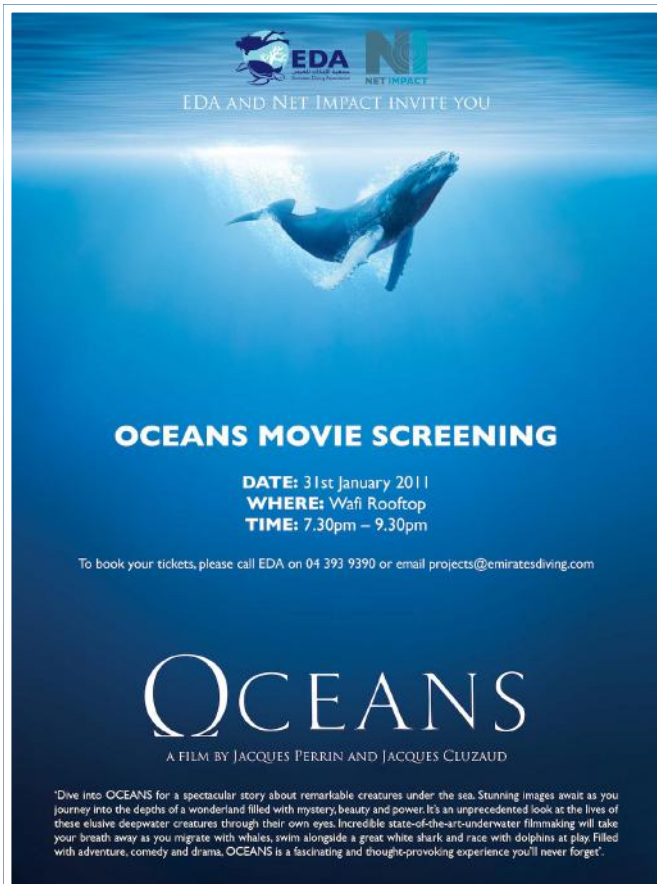
Since the programme's launch over a decade ago, Ford has awarded more than US\$2,000,000 in grants to over 300 high-quality projects throughout Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Central America, Middle East and Puerto Rico to further their environmental initiatives.

For enquiries regarding the Ford Motor Company Conservation & Environmental Grants, please write to [fmegrant@ford.com](mailto:fmegrant@ford.com).





# EDA MOVIE SCREENING OF OCEANS



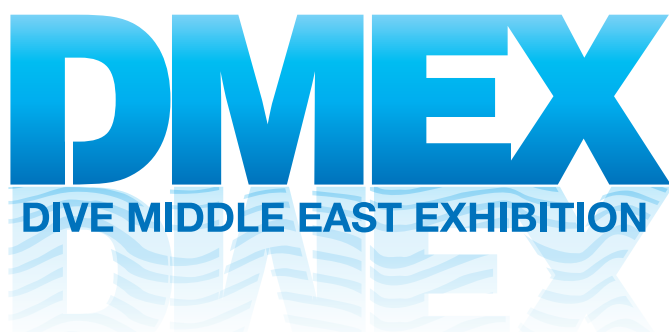
EDA teamed up with Net Impact and held their first event of the year on the Wafi Rooftop on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January with a movie night under the stars showing 'Oceans', a film by Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud. The stunning film was set perfectly and seemed almost 3D with the effects of the unusual wind we had on that evening that captured and played with the wind, waves and the water currents on screen.

The doors opened at 7.30pm to allow everyone to get their tickets and order some food in before setting themselves down in the comfy bean bags. The film began at 8pm and had everyone mesmerised by the exquisite images and remarkable sounds captured.





# DMEX 2011 PRESENTATIONS



Maintaining its unique position as the only international diving event in the Middle East, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Dive Middle East (DMEX) has something for everyone. From exciting educational activities for children to new diving pursuits for experienced enthusiasts, the show offers a unique platform for the very latest in diving equipment, supplies, services and techniques. Complemented by live demonstrations, the 2011 show will also host a series of presentations about the latest dive gear, training programmes and projects across the region and beyond.

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL MARINE CLUB, MINA SEYAH | 1 - 5 MARCH 2011 | 4PM - 9.30PM DAILY

## DAY ONE Tuesday, 1 March 2011

TIME	SUBJECT	PRESENTER
16:00 – 17:00		
17:00 – 18:00	Equipment Presentation	PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT
18:00 – 19:00	New product demo from Aqua Lung	AL BOOM DIVING
19:00 – 20:00	Try Dives & Equipment Presentations	NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES

## DAY TWO Wednesday, 2 March 2011

TIME	SUBJECT	PRESENTER
16:00 – 17:00		
17:00 – 18:00		
18:00 – 19:00	Rescue diver demo & try dive	AL BOOM DIVING
19:00 – 20:00	Try dives	AL MAHARA

## DAY THREE Thursday, 3 March 2011

TIME	SUBJECT	PRESENTER
16:00 – 17:00		
17:00 – 18:00	Blade Fish 7000 with Turbo	PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT
18:00 – 19:00	Try Dives & Equipment	PAVILION DIVE CENTRE
19:00 – 20:00	Discover Tec Diving	AL BOOM DIVING

## DAY FOUR Friday, 4 March 2011

TIME	SUBJECT	PRESENTER
16:00 – 17:00	Free diving demonstration; Free diving disciplines, Yoga for Free Diving, Leaflet hand-outs and audience Q&A's.	FREE DIVING TEAM
17:00 – 18:00	Try Dives & Equipment	PAVILION DIVE CENTRE
18:00 – 19:00	Ladies Dive Classes & Gear	AL BOOM DIVING
19:00 – 20:00	Try Dives & Equipment Presentations	NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES

## DAY FIVE Saturday, 5 March 2011

TIME	SUBJECT	PRESENTER
16:00 – 17:00	Free diving demonstration; Free diving disciplines, Yoga for Free Diving, Leaflet hand-outs and audience Q&A's.	FREE DIVING TEAM
17:00 – 18:00	Rebreather Demo	AL BOOM DIVING
18:00 – 19:00	Try Dives & Equipment Presentations	NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES
19:00 – 20:00	Full Face Mask Underwater Communication/Rebreather	PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT



# DMEX EXHIBITORS PROFILES

## AGGRESSOR & DANCER FLEETS

World class LiveAboard itineraries are offered in 18 destinations by the Aggressor and Dancer Fleets including three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Since 2008 the Dancer Fleet and Aggressor Fleet represent two unique brands owned by the same parent company. Starting in 1984 as the pioneers of LiveAboard diving and the largest organization of LiveAboard adventure cruises in the world today, the combined knowledge, resources, experience, and technical expertise are all focused on delivering a safe adventure you will remember for a lifetime on each and every cruise. A range of itineraries are available including those for divers wanting to complete their check-out dives to specialized itineraries that explore uncharted waters to thrilling cage dives with Great White Sharks or the serene beauty of snorkeling with Humpback Whales. We have something for everyone. Please visit our websites at [www.aggressor.com](http://www.aggressor.com) and [www.DancerFleet.com](http://www.DancerFleet.com).

**STAND NO: DMEX H6-5**



## AL MAHARA DIVING CENTER LLC

Al Mahara Diving Center LLC is a premiere PADI 5 Star Instructor Development Dive Center offering full range of services. With our professional team of experienced instructors and technicians, we offer scuba diver training from entry level to instructor development and scuba diving trips locally and abroad with excellent customer service and safety in mind. We are also an Aqualung Partner Center and carry a full range of branded name scuba equipment such as Aqualung, Apeks, Suunto, Cressi Sub, Dive Rite, Uemis Dive Computer, PADI materials, Scuba Innovation, Amphibious Outfitters and Malibu Kayaks, an innovative design of quality kayaks for the casual paddler to the adventurer and the sea anglers. We are here to provide the best customer care, quality products and brand equipment to all our marine enthusiasts.

**STAND NO: DMEX F4**



## AL BOOM DIVING

Al Boom Diving has PADI 5 Star IDC Centres in Dubai: our main training hub at our Aquacentre on Al Wasl Road; at the Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo in the Dubai Mall and in the Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa. In Fujairah, you will find us at Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort and in Dibba Musandam at the Golden Tulip Beach Resort. We offer all PADI courses from beginner to instructor level with a professional team of PADI Instructors and three PADI Course Directors on staff, speaking a variety of languages. Daily diving with transport, from Dubai to all of our locations makes diving easy and fun. Opt to dive and stay with accommodation at our partner hotels. Al Boom Diving is the distributor for top dive brand AquaLung, Cressi, Trident, Technisub and more. Great retail offers will be available at the Al Boom Diving stand during DMEX.

[www.alboomdiving.com](http://www.alboomdiving.com)

Tel: 04 342 2993 | Email: [abdiving@emirate.net.ae](mailto:abdiving@emirate.net.ae)

**STAND NO: DMEX G3**



## ATLANTIS DIVE CENTRE



**ATLANTIS  
DIVE CENTRE**

The Atlantis Dive Centre is a 5 Star Instructional Development Dive Resort & National Geographic Centre, located in the idyllic grounds of the Atlantis Hotel. The Dive Centre offers the full range of PADI courses including PADI Tec and also IYT Boat skipper courses. The Dive Centre has state of the art facilities, including two indoor salt-water pools and offers diving 365 days a year!

**STAND NO: DMEX H6-1**

## EMEG (EMIRATES MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP)

The Emirates Marine Environmental Group (EMEG) is a non-profit organization based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Established in 1996 under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikhha Manal Bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the leadership of Ali Saqar Sultan Al Suweidi, EMEG is specialized in dealing with various environmental issues. As the first marine environmental group in the UAE, EMEG provides services and solutions for a variety of projects focusing on a range of marine and terrestrial environmental issues from around the country.



EMIRATES MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP  
مجموعة الإمارات  
للبيئة البحرية

## THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI (EAD)

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) was established in 1996. EAD is the Government entity responsible for championing environmental sustainability, protecting the environment and wildlife of Abu Dhabi, protecting groundwater, and ensuring that the economic vision for Abu Dhabi is achieved in a way that protects our natural heritage and maintains a good quality of life for all, now and in the future.

Our work includes water resources and water quality, climate change and air quality, marine and terrestrial biodiversity and wildlife conservation. We develop and implement policies, we regulate business operations, deliver targeted projects and run environmental education and awareness programmes.

### WHAT WE DO

#### A. To preserve our natural heritage

- We monitor and survey habitats and species in Abu Dhabi and use this information to target our conservation efforts. At the moment, 8.9% of our sea and 5% of land falls within a designated protected area.
- We work as a guardian of endangered local native species such as the dugong and sea turtles.
- We promote sustainable fishing practices and watch over the birds, mammals and reptiles which roam our land.
- We deliver a number of programmes to manage our groundwater, as part of Abu Dhabi's integrated water resource strategy.

#### B. To protect our future

- We provide advice to government and other entities on the environmental implications of new policies and, as required, support the implementation of federal policies, such as those to tackle climate change.
- We develop policies and strategies such as the Abu Dhabi's Water Resources Master Plan and Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. By the end of 2011, we will have produced – on behalf of the Government – a comprehensive policy, legal and governance framework for environmental sustainability, an initiative called "Environment 2030".
- As a regulator, our role is to ensure that industry and other entities minimise their impact on the environment. We use environmental impact assessments to help us set the environmental parameters for projects. We enforce these by issuing permits, which contain emission limits, and by inspecting industrial processes.
- At EAD, we aim to lead by example by working as sustainably as we can. We are working hard to continue to reduce the energy and water we use, the waste we produce and our overall carbon footprint. We will continue to work with our suppliers and contractors to source and procure sustainable goods and services and build on our award winning 'Green IT' initiative.

#### C. To educate and raise awareness

- We raise awareness of the environment; not just creating an appreciation for its uniqueness but also the challenges it faces. We have developed award-winning environmental education programmes in schools, and we educate the public about our amazing natural heritage and how they can help preserve it as responsible citizens. We also educate our own staff to be environmentally-aware "ambassadors".

For more information, please visit [www.ead.ae](http://www.ead.ae) or e-mail us at [customerservice@ead.ae](mailto:customerservice@ead.ae)

**STAND NO: DMEX H3-3**



## EMIRATES DIVING ASSOCIATION

EDA is a non-profit voluntary federal organization and is accredited by UNEP as an International Environmental Organization.

Our mission is to conserve, protect and restore the UAE marine resources by understanding and promoting the marine environment and promote environmental diving.

Divers can prove extremely utile in conserving the marine environment through observing, reporting and preventing environmental abuse.

For more information go to [www.emiratesdiving.com](http://www.emiratesdiving.com).

**STAND NO: DMEX H3-2**



## TOURISM MALAYSIA

Tourism Malaysia's mission is to promote Malaysia as an outstanding destination of excellence and to make the tourism industry a major contributor to the socio-economic development of the nation. Visit our official website at [www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my](http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) for further information.

Malaysia Truly Asia!

**STAND NO: DMEX H3-4**



## GULF MARINE SPORTS

Gulf Marine Sports is based in Abu Dhabi, UAE and distributes a wide range of basic snorkeling equipment and professional and pleasure diving gear. Gulf Marine Sports has been established since 1998 and offers an extensive range of diving equipment and professional services. With GMS's big range of the most reputable and leading brand names, such as TUSA, BEUCHAT, BARE, UNDERWATER KINETICS, TRIDENT, SEA PEARL, AMPHIBICO and STINGRAY, you can now buy the best branded gear you have always wanted.

**STAND NO: DMEX G5**





## THE PAVILION DIVE CENTRE

The Pavilion Dive Centre is a PADI 5 Star CDC Centre and National Geographic Dive Centre. The Pavilion Dive Centre is located in the luxurious grounds of the award-winning Jumeirah Beach Hotel. As the only PADI Career Development Centre in the Middle East TPDC attracts diving professionals from near and far to gain quality professional development and a start in the diving industry. PADI Divemaster, Instructor Development (IDC), Instructor Specialty, IDC Staff Courses, EFRI and Instructor Examinations take place at several times of the year on fixed schedules.

Besides PADI professional Development our multilingual team of skilled PADI Instructors conduct the entire range of PADI recreational Diving Courses for the young and old. TPDC also offers daily dive excursions to certified divers on both East and West coasts of the UAE and has a large selection of SCUBAPRO Diving Equipment along with PDC branded diving apparel.

**STAND NO: DMEX F5**



## PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT

Premiers for Equipment is a 100% local establishment based in Abu Dhabi, UAE founded in 2001, dealing with several Government Authorities, Municipalities, Oilfield Companies, Divers & Diving Centers as a sole agent to worldwide diving companies.

We are committed to providing a first class service to complement our quality products and to offer our clients a strong local support along with the latest technology in the field of recreational and technical diving. Our main aim is to make diving easier and more enjoyable, to discover the pleasures of the underwater world by offering a complete range of top quality gear that is affordable and reliable.

We are the authorized distributor of OCEANIC-USA (recreational diving), HOLLIS-USA (technical diving), OCEANREEF-Italy (underwater telecommunication systems), TEKNODIVER (custom made swimsuits), EXPLORER CASE (waterproof cases), PICASSO (free diving and spear fishing), BLADEFISH (dive scooter), and PERSISTENT-USA (spear guns).

For further information please visit our website at [www.premiers-uae.com](http://www.premiers-uae.com) or at our shop at Fisherman's Area, Al Meena-Abu Dhabi.

**STAND NO: DMEX F3**



## SCUBAPRO & SUBGEAR

SCUBAPRO has been making high quality diving equipment for over 48 years. Our technical experience and commitment to innovation have enabled us to maintain a leading position in the diving industry. Our perseverance in creating high quality, extremely comfortable and safe equipment continues, so you can focus on enjoying your diving adventures.

SCUBAPRO first appeared in the scuba diving world in the early 1960's and brought to the market many innovations for diving that are still being used today. In 1965 the first version of the Jet fin first appeared. After well over 40 years the fin is still popular with technical and military divers worldwide and is one of the most copied scuba products ever sold. Today, SCUBAPRO remains a premier manufacturer of diving equipment and employs over 330 people spread over 11 countries, covering North and Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia. SCUBAPRO also has 2 R&D centers, 2 factories and 6 sales and distribution centers. SCUBAPRO is part of Johnson Outdoors Inc.

SUBGEAR, formally called SEEMANN SUB, has had a highly successful life in Germany since 1979, due to a focus on quality dive equipment at reasonable prices. SUBGEAR has evolved into one of the worldwide leaders in the manufacturing of diving equipment, including gear for kids, gear for lifestyle diving and specialized products for female divers. In April 2007 the SEEMANN SUB brand was acquired by Johnson Outdoors Inc., a leader in outdoor equipment, and was launched in the rest of Europe, Middle East and Africa. SUBGEAR enjoys significant success as a diving gear brand focused on good quality equipment at reasonable prices. SUBGEAR was introduced in the USA in Spring 2010 and will be available in Asia this year. The brand philosophy remains the same all over the world: Experience the difference.

**STAND NO: DMEX H4-I**



## COASTAL TECHNICAL DIVERS

Coastal Technical Divers is the UAE's ONLY dedicated full service technical and rebreather facility offering:

- Open Circuit/Rebreather Diving
- Training at ALL levels including Rebreather Trimix Instructor
- On Site Trimix/Nitrox/Heliox
- Draeger and Molecular products CO2 Scubber
- Scooters
- Trips and Expeditions
- Sales/Service
- No Depth or Time LIMITS

With over 20 years technical diving experience, believe it, whatever you are looking for, our team of experienced experts will deliver. We lead, others follow.

**STAND NO: DMEX H6-7**



## NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES

Nomad Ocean Adventures is a Padi dive centre based in Dibba Musandam, Oman and has been operating from its guesthouse for the last 7 years. It is the only dive centre in the region that offers accommodation and diving packages. All the diving instructors have a minimum experience of 5 years in the Musandam and know all the dive sites like the back of their hands. Just like for the diving packages, we were the first to offer such services, we are now going to be the first dive centre to offer free nitrox to all nitrox certified divers!

We can now teach or guide in French, German, Dutch and English!

At Nomad you will find something that is found nowhere else in the UAE, the best rates for quality, fun, awesome speedboat, safety, convenience, great food and awesome diving.

So don't waste time anymore, your diving getaway is only a fin kick away!

**STAND NO: DMEX F6**



## DJIBOUTI: ESCAPE TO THE PARADISE

The Office National du Tourisme de Djibouti (Djibouti Tourism Board) aims to promote the enormous tourist potentialities of the Republic of Djibouti.

Djibouti has all you'll ever need, from a selection of beaches to a wide selection of unique places, refreshed by dips into crystal water.

Djibouti, the new destination.

Unforgettable diving in spectacular underwater landscapes: corals, dolphins, whale sharks. Big game fishing.

Welcome to Djibouti. Come and see us.

**STAND NO: DMEX H3-I**



# DMEX

DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION

# SEE YOU THERE

## NYUAD STUDENTS GO FOR PADI DISCOVER SCUBA EXPERIENCE ON AL MAYA ISLAND RESORT



Congratulations to the 36 students from New York University of Abu Dhabi who participated in the PADI Discover Scuba Diving Program with Al Mahara Diving Center at the beautiful Al Maya Island Resort in February.

Students were treated to an exciting day of introductory scuba experiences and a session on discover snorkelling and water sports including donut rides, pedal boats, banana boat rides and sea kayaking.

The experience left some students wanting to come back to continue the scuba program and become certified divers and be an ambassador of the sea.



Photos by Peter Mainka (EDA Abu Dhabi Committee member)



## DUBAI CHAMBER VISITS EDA OFFICES



Dubai chamber staff visited EDA offices on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> of February.

Dubai Chamber are generous sponsors of some EDA activities, and their visit saw some of that sponsorship go towards offering 5 lucky Dubai Chamber staff members an open water dive course, and 4 discover scuba dive courses offered by EDA.

After two presentations given by EDA to DC staff, questions were asked and a lot of interest was generated towards the subject of reefs, protecting them, and the wonderful world of diving.

Dubai Chamber staff sent us the following feedback about their visit:

*"Thank you both for the lovely trip! It was informative and very interesting! I felt I was in a biology field trip (I wish there was a quiz afterwards I would have scored and won another thing!"*

*"Very informative presentation from EDA. At least it has set us off thinking about the underwater world and what we can do on our personal level to make the difference. We now know which fish to buy and maybe we would help in counting the fish underwater during our future scuba diving expeditions."*

*"I would like to thank you for everything, the tour fun and the presentations were so informative and hopefully soon I will send you the certificate and pictures of me under the water. Thanks again to all and have a great weekend."*



## 10KM SAVE OUR OCEANS RUN

BY RENÉ IRANI

Why did I sign up for this? Right, to save our oceans! It's 4am and everything of me just wants to turn around and listen to the pillow for another couple of hours or so. This is definitely not my time. The starter's gun will echo over Media City at 7 something. Today is the day. The Dubai Marathon 2011 is on. I opted for the 10km distance (what a clever decision, not to run the full 42k!). If I can do my run in one hour, I'd be happy. The cunning idea behind getting up three hours earlier is to outsmart my body. I'm a runner but never ran a competition. For one, because I enjoy being alone while running. And here I am, runner number 9598 on my chest. So much for solo-running and meditating by only the sound of my breathing. The other reason lies in the fact, that most running events kick off at dawn. The trouble is, my body doesn't function properly at this time of the day. So, in order to circumvent my system, I thought getting up way in advance makes my brain think it's way in the day by the time my engine needs to perform.

Driving through the darkness of Dubai, approaching my destiny, it starts raining. Seriously, how many days a year does it rain in Dubai? Does it really have to be today? Never mind, I ran in rain before. Even in snow. It's just some years behind. Arriving at the scene, thinking I'd be the early bird, the venue around the old Hard Rock Café is already hectically busy. The scratch line is fenced and runners packed in there like cattle. The 10k line up has to wait, though. Marathon masochists go first with the international runner-elite lining up at the spearhead. Marathon to me is not like football, I realize, recognizing none of these top athletes.

Around 8,000 runners for the 10km drift, according to the voice from the big speakers all around the place. The announcer underlines his words of motivation with high beat tunes. I spot him a bit off site, microphone in one hand, a cigarette in the other. True role-model approach! There is supposed to be a group warm-up exercise together with dedicated fitness trainers – so he says. Fortunately there is no sign of the cheerleaders. I'm so squeezed in between my fellow soldiers of fortune that I'm quite happy about it. They probably realized that a warm-up session would have quickly turned into close combat exercise than anything else.

People around me run for various reasons. And you can tell: Some run for the run as such. Others participate with a mission. You can read it from their tricots. Charities, fund raisings, corporate bonding, just to name a few. You also see the equipment fanatics, carrying all this lightweight back-packs, the dink-container belts, GPS-devices and other survival supporting kits, you would think they are crossing the Empty Quarter. There are others who put more emphasis on their looks. Neat one-garment suits form the wind tunnel with color matching shoelaces and shades in the hair; iPods attached. Runners in

style! Myself, by the way, I wear the Emirates Diving Association – Save Our Oceans t-shirt. Unfortunately, as much as I searched, I can't see any other EDA promoters. Which makes perfect sense. After all, we are divers: our identification lies sub sea, not on land.

Someone next to me said he heard the gun. I didn't, due to the outdoor speaker next to me, hammering the tunes of Black Eyed Peas into my ears. Okay, here we go. Finally! But instead of running, we move with the pace of a funeral procession. Too many people squeezing through the start gate at the same time. Eventually the path widens and I can switch into bouncing mode. On track now, I try to stick to the one advice I got from various people over the past days: Don't over-pace yourself! Don't let the fast runners pull you. But who is pulling the fast runners?, I'm thinking. Anyways, I feel surprisingly energetic: bring it on! Until suddenly I hear a woman screaming somewhere behind me, to my left. Turning around, my eyes are unsuccessfully screening for the paramedics. In full Emergency First Response mode, I identified the 'victim'. I'm pleased to discover that she is happily singing along with whatever she listens to on her iPhone. She thinks she's singing whereas to her environment it's more like the sound of a cat-fight.

Twenty minutes on the clock, people around me start applauding and shouting. They are cheering the first of us, almost finishing the 10km on the opposite lane. What? Twenty-two minutes and the first girl shows up on the home run lane. I suddenly feel like running with a weight belt on, right hand release. I mean, these are the amateurs we're talking about. Never mind 12 year old kids outrunning me at a stage where I thought my pace is exceptionally good.

So it takes a while not to take the whole thing too seriously. Looking around me I discover that people are actually having fun. That's when I start loosening up and from there on the run is pure pleasure. Now I start passing other runners. Picking up one by one. And another one. Until something bites me in the back of my right thigh. Ouch! Where is that miserable...no, it's not a dog. It's my muscle, painfully signaling me I'm overdoing it.

Run-limping the final kilometer, re-entering Media City, here they are, the masses of people who made the effort of getting out of their Friday-early-morning-beds, just to cheer us runners, to cheer me up. Wow, adrenalin kicks in. The pain, gone. Okay now, my back straight, my chest up. Can you read it? Save Our Oceans!

**TIME IN:**  
00:57:45



## ATLANTIS DIVE CENTRE PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB



January 2011 the Atlantis Dive Centre launched its new Photography/Videography club. It is free to join, everyone is welcome and we have been having a lot of fun. The response has been amazing and in the club we have a whole range of photographers from first time photographers to professional photographers.

We meet the first Tuesday of every month at 7pm at the dive centre. In the meeting we have guest speakers or members of the club showing their pictures and passing on advice on how they took their pictures. This month Gordon and Leo entertained us with some amazing pictures, stories and talked through housing options. March we are looking at 'white balancing'.

As well as the meetings we have, we also run several trips. In February we ran a photography dive trip to the Neptune and Hopper Barge,

unfortunately due to the weather we had to cancel the East Coast trip. But fear not, 10-12 March we are running a trip with Al Marsa to dive the Magical Musandam.

The great advantage of running 'photography trips' is, we choose dive sites suitable for photography relative to depth and currents. If it's good we stay on the dive site until we have all got that amazing shot.

To help improve the quality of our photography, all club members have been taking advantage of our 3.5m salt-water pools, which is free to use anytime. They have been perfecting their buoyancy and also practicing taking pictures whilst hovering. Photographing our strategically placed 'fish'...fish on a string! Its awesome as they don't move, don't need feeding and are beautifully painted!

Working with Scuba Dubai in March, we will have a demo day with varying types of BCD's for everyone to come and try. Staff from the dive centre and Scuba Dubai will be on hand to talk about the BCD's, so please come and join us and try out the latest Wing BCD.

So to all budding photographers out there, please come and join in the fun, its free and open to all level of divers. See you at the dive centre soon.

## ATLANTIS DIVE CENTRE NEW CLUB MEMBERSHIP



March 1<sup>st</sup>, the Atlantis Dive Centre is launching its new club member's card. It's free to join and comes with a whole host of benefits:

- Preferential rates on all Musandam trips
- Discount on certain retail items within the Atlantis Dive Centre
- Members rates on pleasure diving
- Members rates on specialty courses
- Free EANX for EANX certified divers
- Free use of our salt water pools
- Free dives on the house reef
- A great looking members card

We will be at the Boat show if you would like to sign up. Or Please come up to the Atlantis Dive Centre.

## INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT



April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, PADI will be holding the next instructor examination in Dubai. Last year the instructor candidates from the Atlantis Dive Centre did extremely well, with everyone passing with flying colours. Fingers crossed for everyone this year.

We run the Instructor Development part time and start nice and early (March). By doing this, it gives you a couple of extra weekends additional to the IDC to join Jason and Paul and the IDC staff of the Atlantis Dive Centre in workshops, go over your theory/standards again and again so come the big day you are very confident.

We also run a practice IE, where we run it exactly as the PADI examiners do. This worked very well last year and all of the 2010 candidates found the workshops and practice IE a huge benefit.



## DISCOVER SCUBA DIVING

As avid divers I am sure you have heard your friends say when you try to get them diving, 'I may not like it!' sounds familiar? Well fear not...At the Atlantis Dive Centre sign up one person for a discover scuba diving program and another goes free – 2 for 1. Then after your diving, enjoy a complimentary day at the water park.

The complimentary access to the waterpark is also for any pleasure diver or anyone on a course with us.





## LIGHT & MOTION HAVE COME TO DUBAI

At the Birmingham Dive Show last year, Jason met the owners of Light & Motion and spent several hours learning about their amazing camera housings and lights. The Atlantis Dive Centre is very pleased to announce that they have now become the dealers for Light & Motion.

Available in the dive centre are some demo lights and cameras, so please all avid photographers or videographers come on up to the dive centre and have a play with our pools and try out the Light & Motion equipment.

# VIDEO COURSES

Atlantis Dive Centre is working with Jonathan Ali Khan and his production company Wild Planet Production. Jonathan has many years making documentaries working with National Geographic and BBC to mention a few. Currently he is on a months trip in the Musandam working on his documentary 'Shark Quest Arabia'. The Atlantis Dive Centre are very honored to be working with him on this project and the many more documentaries to come.

For the video courses we will be running 3 in total:

### 1. Basic Underwater Video Appreciation

This is an entry level videography course for amateur and beginners looking to learn the basic skills involved with camera handling, videography principles, diving skills and field craft.

### 2. Advanced Underwater Video Appreciation

This is an advanced level videography course for divers seriously looking to enhance their camera handling skills, and to better understand videography principles, diving skills and field craft. Shooting to tell a story (wide & macro) under supervision.

### 3. Professional Underwater Videographer Workshop

This is a comprehensive 4 week workshop for divers seriously looking to acquire the skills of a professional underwater cameraman that will teach advanced training in diving, filming and camera handling, editing and production, equipment selection and presentation development.

Offered to a limited number of trainees at any onetime; we can ensure an exclusive and personalized experience. This course is designed to help divers take an important career step providing a no-holds barred insight into the reality of underwater filmmaking.

Creating a 6-8 minute short film shot during the field trip. The field trip travelling to dynamic and exciting locations where our trainees can be guaranteed opportunities to film marine life with hands on shooting instruction.

The courses are sponsored by Light & Motion so during the course you will be using the latest and advanced equipment. The courses are ideal for anyone keen to take their passion one giant step forward or for those leaving school and heading off to University this September to start their career in Marine Biology, media etc.



## DIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA



I am sure you have all heard of the 'Sardine Run'! I know for me, it is definitely in my top 5 of dives to do and June this year the Atlantis Dive Centre is running a trip.

In February, we brought Jamie, the Director of African Space over to Dubai to do a presentation at the Dive Centre and he certainly moved the Sardine Run from number 3 on my list to 'I HAVE TO DO IT!' I think that is above number one now!

During the presentation, the inevitable question did come up, 'so what could I reasonably be expected to see?' Jamie just smiled and said, 'Watch this'. Not showing us some wonderful National Geographic movie we have all seen, but rather he showed us the footage from the last trip. So if Bronze Whaler Sharks, Humpback Whales, Fur Seals, Sand Tiger Sharks, Great White Sharks, Bait balls 20 metres in diameter and not just ones or two they were everywhere...if that appeals to you...please read on.

The plan will be to spend a few days doing warm up dives, how to dive in the rubber duckies, practice the launches in the rubber duckies, getting used to diving with a mass of pelagic around us. From Jamie's vast experience, he likes everyone to do these warm up dives, so you get the most out of the sardine run.

### The trip will consist of:

- Arrive in Cape Town and head for the Great White dives.
- Move to Plettenberg Bay to dive with the seals.
- Then up to Port St. Johns for the Sardine Run where we will be diving in it for 6 days.

Port St. Johns is where all the dive centres descend for 2 months of the year. Also, the National Geographic and BBC documentary crews will be there. Last year the group of divers Jamie took were blown away by the diving and then enjoyed dinner sitting with my personal hero, Sir David Attenborough and the film crew from the Blue Planet.

If you are interested, please drop me a line [Jason@atlantisdivecentre.com](mailto:Jason@atlantisdivecentre.com) and I will send you all the information.

# THE MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

## GASCO DIVING CLUB GALA DINNER BY ABDULLA AYOUB



Human activities over the last two centuries have steadily tipped the scale of survival against the Hawksbill turtle. Constantly threatened by habitat loss, accidental fishing, pollution, human harvest and climate change, these ancient mariners have been declared critically endangered. Under these conditions the Emirates Wildlife Society in association with WWF (EWS-WWF) has embarked on a region-wide marine turtle conservation project.

In April 2010, EWS-WWF launched the Gulf Turtle Conservation Project to implement a comprehensive awareness and research programme using the latest in technology and science – satellite tracking. This in turn will promote conservation of marine turtles of the region, and even worldwide. The project involves important stakeholders in each country involved, and will combine scientific research and monitoring with environment awareness on marine turtle protection to bring about regional change – a positive change resulting in long-term conservation of marine turtles.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

EWS-WWF is calling on UAE residents to support the Marine Turtle Conservation Project.

### FOR INDIVIDUALS:

#### Adopt a Turtle\*

For individuals who are looking to contribute to the project, we offer symbolic turtle adoption packs. These packs include a cuddly soft toy 'Nadia' and you can follow her tagged friends' journeys across the region on [www.gulfturtles.com](http://www.gulfturtles.com). The 'Turtle Adoption Pack' also includes an adoption certificate, a sticker, a photo card with turtle facts, and a brochure about the three year programme which seeks to track over 75 Hawksbill turtles across the GCC.

Adoption packs are available at The Shelter (Al Quoz), Al Boom Dive Centres, Fairmont Hotel Dubai and Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

### FOR DIVE CENTRES:

#### Distribution of Turtle Adoption Packs

#### Become a Distributor

Join our growing list of distributors! We are inviting dive centres to help us distribute our Turtle Adoption Packs with the proceeds going directly into marine turtle conservation.

EWS-WWF will provide all necessary material to help you set up.

All funds collected will exclusively go towards the Marine Turtle Conservation Project.

For more information on the project log on to [www.gulfturtles.com](http://www.gulfturtles.com)

\*The Turtle Adoption Certificate states that the bearer has contributed to the Marine Turtle Conservation Project and has symbolically adopted a turtle. By opting to 'adopt' a turtle the certificate will highlight the individual's adoption of the cause and efforts of the Marine Turtle Conservation Project.



GASCO Diving Club – GDC, held its first Gala Dinner at Yas Links on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2010. The theme of the event was to reward GASCO's volunteer divers for their remarkable contribution to the Clean Up Arabia 2010 campaign.

The event was headed by Gasco Recreation Committee (GRC) Chairman Mr. Rashid Anoon, Co Chairman Mr. Mohammed Kuleib, and the Sports Team Leader Mr. Ateeq Al Hosani.

It was a picture perfect setting with a beautiful sunset overlooking the golf course, "a delightful atmosphere". The program started with a small reception and cocktail drinks, followed by a warm welcome note by Mr. Ateeq, proceeded by Mr. Kuleib's valuable speech where he placed a heavy emphasis on the need to adhere to health and safety procedures and the need to preserve the environment. He applauded the diving team efforts and active involvement in serving the community and encouraged them to set an example for others. Mr. Abdullah Ayoub GASCO diving coordinator ended the program with a short presentation on the club's achievements in 2010 and the 2011 planned activities.

Also present, Mr. Ibrahim Al Zu'bi EDA director who commended GASCO's divers' efforts and involvement in the clean up campaigns, both sides exchanged trophies and renewed their commitment for future cooperation.

The fun started when a selection of photographs taken during GASCO diving trips were presented for votes for the Best and Funniest picture.

In addition, GASCO Diving Club decided to have its own and unique slogan, therefore a slogan competition was conducted and the recommended set of slogans were presented for votes by GRC, team members, and EDA's representative.

### The winning slogan was:

"Dive, Explore, and Preserve"

The event ended with a nice BBQ dinner, and appreciation certificates were distributed to the participants.





## AN ALTERNATE CAREER IN DIVING



Looking for an alternate career, or maybe a dream part-time job? Look no further than the PADI Go Pro options available. Whether you are looking to earn some extra cash on the weekend, have an alternate career, or just have fun with friends, becoming a PADI Instructor can be the way to achieve all of these new year resolutions.

If you are ready for the challenges and rewards that come with being a PADI Instructor, The PADI Instructor Development Course (IDC), and PADI Instructor Exam (IE), to be held this April in Dubai, is waiting for you!

As the number 1 Dive Centre in the UAE for many years, we offer great facilities with two fully equipped classrooms and a great training environment; Al Boom Diving can guarantee the highest quality education in a relaxed environment.

To further enhance your skills and add logged dives, you are welcome to help in Dubai or in Fujairah on the weekends or anytime you are available; just give us a call in advance. Our instructors will be delighted to assist you with your training and development.

All courses are held at our dive centre at Al Wasl Road in Dubai. I'll be looking forward to helping you become the best educated PADI dive instructor possible. Please feel free to come to the dive centre for further clarification.

We have some really good deals on at the moment just to convince you to sign up today! These are valid until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The next Instructor Exam will be held in Dubai on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

- FREE PADI Divemaster Course, when you sign for the Divemaster and IDC Courses together
- A discounted price of Dhs 5,600 for the IDC with PADI eLearning
- 50% off the MSDT Course (1,500 instead of 3,000) when you sign for the IDC
- 50% discount on one set of personal dive kit; when signing the DM and IDC; or just the IDC courses

For more information on the PADI Go Pro options, email Al Boom Diving today on: [abdiving@emirates.net.ae](mailto:abdiving@emirates.net.ae)



## GET WRECKED!

BY STEVE WOOD PADI IDC STAFF INSTRUCTOR



As it turns out, the economic slowdown has had some positive impacts on diving in the United Arab Emirates! As some of the construction and developments into the sea have finished, the visibility in the Gulf has steadily improved, the marine life is returning and we are now diving out there again!

For several years diving has concentrated on the reefs of the Musandam and Fujairah, but long term ex-pat divers will tell you that out in the Arabian Gulf there are a plethora of dive sites waiting to be explored. As a major shipping area for hundreds of years, the Arabian Gulf has seen many ships ending their days as working vessels, settling onto the sand and slowly becoming a part of the underwater world.

### ABUNDANT FISH LIFE

The seabed of the gulf is sandy, flat and featureless. So a wreck gives the sea life the perfect opportunity to make a secure home. The wrecks themselves are covered in soft corals and colourful hydrocorals, nudibranchs can be found everywhere and around the wrecks you will see hamour, barracudas, jacks, snappers, angelfish and huge batfish. Guitar sharks and various types of rays can also be spotted.

Several wrecks are home to resident turtles and you may even be lucky to see dolphins and a passing whale shark.

### ZAINAB, HAMMOUR BARGE, LION CITY, LUDWIG, JASIM, MV DARA

The stories of the wrecks are many and varied. A deliberate sinking of an illegal oil tanker to avoid boarding by US Coastguards, UAE Navy target practice, unexplained fires and a bomb attack!

And the options are equally varied – from 15 metres deep, well broken up Hammour Barge and its cargo of pipes (you will not see this many hamour in one place again!) to the 60 metres long, 1200 ton Lion City (her name can still be clearly seen on the bow) lying on her side in 30 metres of water.

Another great dive is Zainab. She was a cargo ship involved in the illegal transportation of



light fuel oil from Iraq and was deliberately sunk on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2001 to avoid being boarded by the US Navy. She is intact and lies on her port side. The bridge and the engine room are easily accessible.

Most of the wrecks can be penetrated although be aware you require special training to enter any overhead environment.

My personal favourite is the Jasim. Used by the UAE Navy for target practice, she has broken into three large sections; the stern and engine room, mid cargo section with broken hatches, rigging and vehicle parts, and the bow with lamp rooms and deck winches. As always there is abundant fish life and with this wreck you get some beautiful swim throughs.

## EXTENDING YOUR TRAINING

The depth ranges are just perfect for Nitrox so you can complete your certification in just one day of diving. Deep training, Wreck Penetration and even some levels of technical training can be completed on the wrecks.

If you are to still complete your Advanced Open water course then how about this for a great weekend of diving?

- **FRIDAY** Complete your Navigation and Peak performance buoyancy dives in Jumeirah then head over to the Dubai Mall and complete your Aquarium dive.
- **SATURDAY** Head out from Jebel Ali and complete your Deep and wreck dives. You could even combine your Nitrox training in the same weekend!

## GETTING TO THE WRECKS

Using the Al Boom dive centre at Jebel Ali Resort, we can now dive every Friday and Saturday. Leaving the dive centre at 7:45am, we complete 2 dives and return at approx 2:30pm.

Steve Wood is an Independent Instructor with Al Boom diving.  
[www.scubasteve.ae](http://www.scubasteve.ae)



# AL BOOM DIVE TRIP TO BORACAY



In May, Al Boom Diving will be traveling to the island of Boracay in the Philippines for some diving, sight-seeing, exploring, adrenaline sports, and fun!

The trip will depart the UAE on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> of May for 8 days and 7 nights, returning on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 2011.

Boracay is famous for its perfect white sandy beach and its amazing sunset colours. The Island is 7km long and the narrowest part is about 1km wide. It's composed of 3 local villages which are connected with path ways and tiny roads.

Diving in the Philippines is a treat. The Philippines is considered a biodiversity hotspot. More species appear in this region than in any other part of the tropical reef world. Boracay has gained a solid reputation for macro photography because of the abundance of small critters such as pipefish, gobies, and nudibranchs, as well as the usual colourful reef fish such as damselfish, angelfish, wrasses, squirrelfish and cardinals. Parrotfish, emperors, triggerfish and groupers generally reside at 15 to 20 meter depths, while pelagics like sharks, tunas, trevallies and rays are commonly sighted in the deeper dive sites such as Yapak and Camia. Coral growth is very healthy and spectacular in areas with steady currents, such as Crocodile and Laurel.

The accommodation and diving will be with Victory Divers in Boracay, offering diving from the traditional Philippines' catamarans. Victory Beach Resort with 18 rooms, is located next to the dive shop which is on the famous Whitebeach of Boracay Island.

The trip will combine three dive days with three adventure days. There will be time for sight seeing, watersports, zip-lining, spa visits and sailing around the islands on the adventure days.

Pricing is reasonable with lots of options, making it a tailor-made trip for all.

**Total Price (accommodation, flights, dives, EXCL optional tours):**

**Single:** Dhs 6,950

**Sharing:** Dhs 5,900

**Total Price (accommodation, and dives only; EXCL flights and optional tours):**

**Single:** Dhs 3,250

**Sharing:** Dhs 2,200

(Subject to change if airline or hotel pricing changes – unlikely, but we have to mention that!)

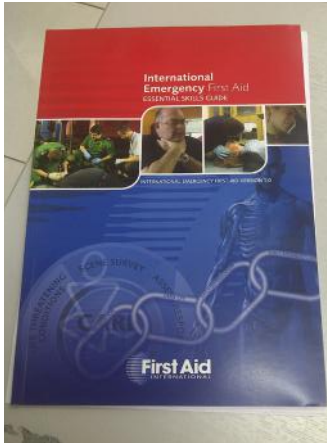
Prior to departure, special offers will be available exclusively to travellers. Discounts on dive travel kits, like the must-have Aqua Lung Zuma set, with a full kit weighing in at less than 7kgs, or PADI courses to prepare for maximum enjoyment of the trip, will be on offer.

Places are limited. If you want to be kept updated on this trip, and are interested in joining, please email [sam@alboomdiving.ae](mailto:sam@alboomdiving.ae)!





## FIRST AID INTERNATIONAL COURSES



Al Boom Diving is happy to be certified as a First Aid International training centre to offer first aid courses that are approved by the Dubai Municipality. First Aid International, based in Brisbane, provides First Aid Training and First Aid Supplies which ensure you are compliant with all health and safety requirements.

Some of the courses available from First Aid International through Al Boom Diving, include:

- Provide Basic Emergency Life Support
- First Aid in the Workplace

Most of the courses have a minimum age requirement of 14 years, and can be completed in half a day. Dive experience is not needed of course as first aid certification is something that is ideal for everyone to know.

First aid training, certified by the Dubai Municipality, is ideal for:

- Those with the responsibility of child care
- Those in the work place
- Divers and adventure sport enthusiasts

For more information on the First Aid International Courses available from Al Boom Diving, please email [abdiving@emirates.net.ae](mailto:abdiving@emirates.net.ae) or visit our website at [www.alboomdiving.com](http://www.alboomdiving.com).

### FIRST AID INTERNATIONAL

Whether you are a diver or not, basic first aid training is essential. Approved by the UK Healthcare and Dubai Municipality, this course gives you a basic knowledge of first aid that is essential in the work place, for child-minders, for sports enthusiast – and for everyone.

### WHAT'S INVOLVED?

This 4-6 hour course provides you with the basic knowledge. First Aid International offers a hands-on approach with progressive assessment throughout the course including multiple choice questionnaires. This is competency based training so we will make sure that you have a total understanding before you go home.

### SCHEDULE

The course is run on demand and can be done at any of our dive centres, or at your workplace.

### DURATION

Half a day

### REQUIREMENTS

Students must be 14 years or older.

### PRICE

Dhs 700 including all course materials, your certification card and classroom sessions.

## YOUNGEST MASTER SCUBA DIVER IN THE UAE



Al Boom Diving recently certified the youngest PADI Master Scuba Diver in the UAE, in the last 3 years! Arthur Chaudhry is 12 years old and has completed his PADI Open Water, Advanced Open Water, Rescue Diver, and five PADI Specialty Diver Courses.

Arthur completed his Night, Navigation, Fish ID, Search and Recovery, Multilevel courses and completed the Dubai Aquarium Specialty Course as his 50<sup>th</sup> dive.

A big congrats from the Al Boom Dive Crew to Arthur!



## LULU ISLAND BEACH CLEAN UP BY GLOBAL ISSUES CONFERENCE YOUNG DELEGATES IN ABU DHABI

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



The American Community School of Abu Dhabi hosted the Global Issues Network (aka GIN) Conference titled "INSPIRE" from the 28<sup>th</sup> January - 30<sup>th</sup> January 2011. This three day conference invited students and their advisers from the Emirates and the Gulf region to share their projects based on global issues and to strengthen the network and inspire others about the plight of our planet. The GIN's mission is to help students realize they can make a difference by empowering them to work with their international network of peers to bring about solutions for global issues.

We would like to thank the following partners, Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi, Central Waste Management of Abu Dhabi, CNIA, Veolia, Al Mahara Diving Center and EDA members for their support in this clean up initiative.

Emirates Diving Association and Al Mahara Diving Center were there to lend a hand and highlight the detrimental effects of marine debris and its impact on our marine environment. An action plan was formed to conduct a beach cleanup on Lulu Island, a picturesque sand dune island facing the Abu Dhabi Corniche. 24 delegates met at the Fisherman's port for a short safety briefing and boarded the NCIA boats that transported them onto the shores of Lulu Island. Within 45 minutes and a 300 meter of the 11.5km shoreline, all the volunteers realized there was a significant amount of marine debris. In teams of 4-5, students and advisors picked up 15 large bags full of trash, counted and sorted the items using the International Coastal Clean Up data cards. From this, items collected are summarized below. The most abundant trash was the 304 plastic bags collected, followed by 192 plastic beverage bottles, 126 pieces of eating utensils and 124 caps and lids.

As the students and advisors completed their counts and departed Lulu Island, they realized their actions did make a difference that day and they too, can organize similar clean up initiatives and inspire other student bodies from their schools around the globe. We did achieve GIN's mission statement that weekend.

Bags	304
Plastic Beverage Bottles	192
Glass Beverage Bottles	93
Beverage Cans	57
Caps, Lids	124
Clothing/Shoes	5
Eating utensils	126
Food wrappers/Containers	42
Pull tabs	1
Straws/Stirrers	5
Toys	1
Bait Containers	1
Buoys/Floats	2
Crates	1
Fishing nets	12
Oil/Lube Bottles	1
Plastic Sheeting/Tarps	8
Rope	70
Strapping Bands	3
Cigarettes/Filters	17
Cigarettes Lighters	14
Cigar Tips	11
Tobacco Packaging/Wrappers	13
Batteries	1
Building Materials	32
Condoms	4
Diapers	1
Caps	59
Paper	13
Pipe	4
Cups	13
Brooms	1
Brush	2
Styrofoam	6



## STUDENT'S FEEDBACK:

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF JEDDAH (AISJ)

**MOHAMMED ALABOUD** (Grade 8)



The Global Issues Conference, hosted by the American Community School of Abu Dhabi, gave students a wonderful opportunity to help the community, and I was very happy when I knew I would go to Lulu Island, and that I was going to help clean a beach. My friend and I, who is a year younger than me, were chosen together for this activity, but this was not our first choice, but it did not matter because we knew we would have fun helping together. It took us fifteen minutes to get there by bus to the pier, and from there we went to Lulu Island by boat.

When we arrived there, the people working there gave us two bags, one for plastic and the other for any kind of trash we find, and after that we looked around. I was surprised of what I saw; there was trash everywhere, almost of every kind. We found plastic bags almost everywhere and plastic spoons, forks and cups, scattered across the whole beach. We found cigarettes, lighters, glass bottles, ropes, strings, papers, small boxes, and worst we found a dead bird and an animal's skull, and lots more.

My friend and I filled the bags with the trash we picked up. I assumed there was a party held at this beach in the past days, and the people didn't even bother to clean up after themselves. People should care about the environment of the only planet we have, because if we don't, then the human race will have nowhere to live.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF JEDDAH (AISJ)

**KHOLUD ALABOUD** (Grade 7)



I was really glad to be chosen to go to Lulu Island. To me, it was an adventure, because I really didn't know what to expect. But I remembered that I was doing this activity for the Global Issues Conferences, held by the American Community School, and as a first step to help the community.

This trip really opened my eyes to how much care we should put into the environment, because the things I've seen truly shocked me. I have never gathered so much plastic in my life! The beaches were unbelievably littered! We found plastic boxes and plates and spoons and forks, glass bottles, dirty rags, abandoned slippers – let alone the dead birds!

Plastic, and many other substances, when thrown into the sea and decomposed, can become toxic to sea animals. The trip, to me, was an inspiration. I am already planning with my schoolmates to raise awareness to stop littering!

## CAMELBAKS HYDRATE DIVERS

As the air temperatures in this region start to climb, divers will be getting out more frequently doing comfortable two to three dives a day trips and perhaps during the surface interval, get in some free UV tanning rays. In these conditions, divers can easily overlook dehydration. Dehydration is a contributory factor in increasing the risk of getting decompression sickness as we know. The body does not function as efficiently when it's dehydrated and most people are most dehydrated in the morning when they wake up. Even drinking caffeinated or carbonate drinks may have a diuretic effect. In addition, the body's necessary salts (or electrolytes) may require replenishing also. Electrolyte drinks are available to aid in rehydrating a diver. Mineral rich food like bananas can also aid the body to maintain hydration.

One easy method to stay hydrated; divers can use a Camelbak, Better Bottle's patented "Bite-Sip\_Go!" It's spill-proof, BPA-free Camelbak makes it easy to stay hydrated. It is also environmentally friendly as dive operators tend to use small and plastic non-reusable water bottles for their divers.

**Quoted from the Camelbak website:**

*"What is BPA?"*

*Bisphenol-A is an ingredient used to make polycarbonate. In recent months, there has been increasing consumer demand for a bottle that is not made with Bisphenol-A (BPA), and CamelBak is proud to offer BPA-free bottles with the same great properties customers have come to expect from polycarbonate: vibrant color, clarity, durability, dishwasher-safe, and with no residual taste. The entire CamelBak bottle line is now available in BPA-Free materials in North America."*

Al Mahara Diving Center now has Camelbaks for retail. For more information on the various types of models, please email to [info@divemahara.com](mailto:info@divemahara.com) or call **050 111 8125**.

Stay hydrated when you dive!



## MALIBU MINI X KAYAK

If you're looking for an ecofriendly way to get around in the water albeit not a jetski or power fuelled marine vessel with jet propulsion than a great alternative is the sit on top kayak. Not only will it improve your strength, stamina and fitness, it's an environmentally sound method of getting around the waterways. One very familiar model is the Malibu Mini-X and is referred to as the Mini Cooper of kayaks. It performs well in small waters and short distances like the mangrove forest trips. Measuring at 9 feet long and weighing only 39 pounds, this short stubby kayak has a 325 pound weight capacity; therefore it can take on some heavier paddlers. It is a very durable kayak that is great for mangroves and calm waterways.

**USES:** Recreational play, fishing, nature watching, fitness, light touring.

### FEATURES:

- Dry Seating
- Incredibly stable
- Tank well
- Extra large cockpit area
- Up to 2 optional Flush Mount fishing rod holders
- An amazing 325 lbs. weight capacity

**LENGTH:** 9'3"

**WEIGHT:** 45 lbs

**WIDTH:** 33.5"

**DEPTH:** 12"

**FOOTRESTS:** Molded Foot Rests

**MAX LOAD:** 325 lbs

**FRONT:** The Mini-X features an 8" round hatch with removable bucket and room for storage on top.

**CENTER:** A large center hatch with a removable canvas bag, self-draining trays, cup holder; 2 deluxe carry handles with paddle holders and a very roomy/comfortable dry ride.

**REAR:** A nice size rear tank-well area with room enough for a 5 gal. bait tank, milk crate and more.

**OTHER MODELS INCLUDE:** Pro 2 Tandem, Pro Explorer, X-13, X-Factor and accessories.

For more information about Malibu Kayaks, contact Al Mahara Diving Center at [info@divemahara.com](mailto:info@divemahara.com) or call us at 050 111 8125.



## THE RAIN FOREST OF THE SEA IN THE UAE

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



UAE like many countries have a unique marine eco system called mangroves. It covers thousands of hectares of coastline along the UAE and forms an important and integral part of the coastal eco system. Within the UAE, there is 3000 hectare of mangrove forest and 2300 hectares is located in the emirates of Abu Dhabi. Mangroves provide a safe habitat and breeding ground for some fish species, turtles and even commercially significant shrimp, bivalves, gastropods, upside down jellyfish, crabs, terapons, silver biddy, spinefoot, mullet, snapper, grunt fish, gobies/ mudskippers, and sea bream. In addition, birds have a safe nesting and egg laying area in these intertidal areas. Mangroves also provide protection against coastline erosion caused by ocean currents and wave actions. Historically, the mangrove wood was used for constructing homes and ships because of its hardness and high resistance to rot and termites.

The most common species in the UAE is *avicennia marina* or grey mangrove and the once extinct population of *rhizophora mucronata* is being re-introduced in Ras Ghanadah after its 100 years absence.

Recently, Al Mahara Diving Center in partnership with Sea Cruiser has been providing kayaking trips to educate the intrepid paddlers about the importance of the mangrove forest sometimes referred to as the "rainforest of the sea" in Abu Dhabi. The paddling trip can start at various locations but a popular destination is the Eastern Mangrove Lagoon located off the Eastern Ring Road near the new coastal developments. Only a short paddling distance of .5km will take the kayakers into scenic and tranquil waterways amongst the mangroves. The distant sound of the city disappears and the chattering of the avian community comes alive. Turning into the winding channels, there are chance encounters with flocks of pink greater flamingos by the water's edge, egrets, herons, crab plovers, sandpipers and Socotra Cormorants.

Mangrove forests are integral to the preservation of the UAE coastline; it is also under constant threat. These threats include coastal development, pollution, sedimentation, changes in tidal flow and human impacted activities. As divers and marine enthusiasts we also need to protect the mangroves because in some areas mangroves have given way to new developments.

Currently, the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority has planted an estimated 800,000 mangrove plant saplings along the coastline off Sadiyat and Jubail Islands to help reduce the impacts of property development and mitigate the degradation and habitat loss of these areas. We too can spread the message to help protect the precious "rain forest of the sea."

For more details on the kayak tours of the mangroves, please email [info@divemahara.com](mailto:info@divemahara.com) or [info@seacruiser.ae](mailto:info@seacruiser.ae) or call 050 111 8125.

**Please protect our oceans and mangrove forests!**



# EDA VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATE 14<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DAY IN ABU DHABI

PHOTOGRAPHY **KURT DELANDER**



Volunteers from Emirates Diving Association and the Abu Dhabi diving community celebrated the 14<sup>th</sup> National Environment Day under the patronage of HH Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011 by splashing for trash and participating in a beach cleanup at the marina of the Abu Dhabi International Sports Club. This year's theme is, "The Living Desert" and reflects the UAE's effort to raise awareness about the important environmental issues in the UAE. The events that took place across the UAE holds the same objectives, to educate the public about important environmental issues in the UAE, to raise the education and awareness programs for the protection of the environment and sustainable development, to preserve the various types of environments in the UAE and to bridge a close link to the individual elements of the natural environment whether it's the living sea or desert.

EDA's partnership with Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club, Central Waste Management of Abu Dhabi, NCIA, BBM Creations and Al Mahara Diving Center joined by enthusiastic beach and diver volunteers took on the sandy beach and chilly waters in the sports club marina to collect the trash. This event will tie in with the EAD's awareness program titled, "UAE Free from Plastic Bags" campaign which will be launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

Divers and beach volunteers collected over 377 beverage cans, 272 pieces of plastic bags, 164 cigarette butts, 114 containers, plates, cups, forks, knives and spoons and many more items. Surprisingly, 9 waterlogged mobile phones and a phone charger were found underwater. A summary of the items collected will be sent to Project Aware to add to their global data base of marine debris. This exercise educated the participants about the human-made debris and trash and its harmful impacts of the environment and wildlife, the threats to human health and safety and how aesthetically unattractive it is to have the buildup of marine debris in and around the marina. We extend a huge thanks to all the amazing volunteers who have made the commitment to keep our seas clean, well done to our ambassadors of the sea!





# A NEW GENERATION OF DIVERS TAKE YOUR DIVING TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

FEATURE **PREMIERS FOR EQUIPMENT**



In the last two decades, improvements in equipment have completely changed the way we dive by increasing safety and comfort. Diving evolved from an activity for a few experts into a hobby for millions of people throughout the world.

Since the beginning of scuba diving, divers have wanted to talk to each other underwater. So far audio communications have been available only to commercial divers. These systems were also complicated, cumbersome and unfortunately expensive.

However, OCEAN REEF has designed a communication system which is easy to use, lightweight and within a recreational diver's budget. The underwater communication allows a great evolution of the diving activity and an outstanding improvement of the underwater instruction and education.

The OCEAN REEF underwater communication system adds a whole dimension to dive safety and enjoyment by connecting divers with each other and with partners on the surface. It includes the diver transceiver unit (GSM G.divers), a receiving unit for diver wearing a conventional mask and regulator (M101A G. divers) and a portable surface underwater communication transceiver to be used on

board or on the shore (M100 G.divers).

## **GSM G.DIVERS**

The new GSM G.divers transceiver (high performance communication system) expands the diver's ability to communicate with others verbally.

The ultrasonic transceiver boasts the autonomy of approximately 30 hours in receiving mode, a range of operation of 200-250 meters (calm sea water), lightweight and sleek design. It is a powerful, single channel and inexpensive PTT (push to talk) underwater wireless communication unit. The unit automatically activates upon contact with the water and it uses a 9v alkaline battery with a "low battery" alarm which beeps every 30 seconds when the battery is low.

The GSM G.divers communication unit is the perfect addition to any training class or guided tour and operates on the same frequency as all other OCEAN REEF units and most popular wireless communication units on the market. It uses a D-Mic, a special microphone with the housing seated by hydrophobic membrane which is permeable to air, but prevents water from passing through the electronics.

The membrane's reduced thickness limits

any reduction of the vocal signal. The permeability of the membrane keeps the internal pressure equalized with the external pressure, enabling the microphone to be used at practically any depth. Each GSM G.divers comes with the NACS™ (Neptune Adjustable Communication Support). The patented NACS™ is an adjustable support arm for the GSM G.divers and other OCEAN REEF underwater communication units. It can be installed on the left side of the mask and prevents the communication unit from hanging on the mask strap. By relieving the weight of the communication unit, the NACS™ also allows the mask strap to slide easily through the buckle; thus, the strap can stay loose while the mask is donned and the communicator stays out of the way. The NACS™ can be adjusted for tilt and distance between the communication unit and the visor.

## **M101A G.DIVERS**

The M101A G.divers is a receive-only unit operating on one channel. The M101A fits on any conventional mask strap or full face mask models. It might be held and shared by more divers thanks to the high quality speaker. The M101A's reception is so strong that, in fact, it is not always necessary to attach it to the mask strap.



A diver may hold the unit or attach it to a BC allowing other divers to listen to the transmission (dependent upon environmental conditions and distance). The unit automatically activates upon contact with the water. The M101A uses a 9v alkaline battery and has a "low battery" alarm which beeps every 30 seconds when the battery is low. The M101A unit's total battery life is approximately 30 hours.

## M100 G.DIVERS

### Portable Surface Transceiver

The M100 G.divers is a portable surface transceiver unit that may be worn on the operator's belt. This is high performance, compact, and easy to use unit. It is made to respond to the demands of communicating with divers in action without carrying expensive, complicated and heavy units. The size of the main unit is similar to a mobile.

The main unit has a PTT (Push to Talk) button and a headphone/microphone connector. The unit turns on when the headphone/microphone is connected to the main unit. The unit turns off automatically when the headphone/microphone is removed.

A 10 meter (33 feet) transducer cable connects to the main unit and is lowered into the water. The operator may control the depth of the transducer.

It operates on one channel and uses a 9v replaceable alkaline battery with autonomy of approximately 9 hours. The range of operation is approx 200 meters (600 feet).

The world is changing and global communication is flagging this incredible change in our daily lives. The way of diving is going to change too with the introduction of safe, sophisticated and affordable new gear. G.divers is now available in the UAE.



Premiers For Equipment shop is located at Fisherman's Area, Al Meena, Abu Dhabi.  
Tel/Fax: 02-6735955  
Authorized dealer of OCEAN REEF® products

# THE PAVILION DIVE CENTRE NEWS

## A Career in Scuba Diving or just want to take your favourite sport to the Max?

In 2009 when the world started to crumble financially we all saw a steep drop in public spending on recreational activities but surprisingly at The Pavilion Dive Centre we saw a steep rise in PADI Professional Development. When we looked at this globally, we found that individuals look to their talents to earn primary or supplemental income.

At The Pavilion Dive Centre, a PADI Career Development Centre, we have been teaching PADI Professionals in the Middle East for over 10 years. In recent years we have seen a growth in PADI Professional development and believe it is a combination of the need to earn supplemental income and simply a love of the sport and taking to the max.

About a decade ago TPDC pioneered an opportunity for local PADI Instructors working in other professions to use their Instructor rating to earn supplemental income. This freelance Instructor program has grown from strength to strength giving PADI Instructors the opportunity to continue teaching, earn certifications, grow as a PADI Instructor and the opportunity to earn some extra income.

At TPDC we offer you an unbeatable Go Pro opportunity to jump from PADI Rescue Diver to PADI Instructor and beyond before the year is over!

Become a PADI Divemaster for FREE\* when you enrol in a PADI Instructor Course online with TPDC. Then get a great deal on your PADI Instructor Course and receive your PADI MSDT for FREE\*.

With 2 full time PADI Course Directors on staff and 4 guest PADI Course Directors flying into Dubai to give motivational talks to the diving Industry and professional continuing education, The Pavilion Dive Centre gives you the best start to your professional development and exposure to the expertise of well seasoned and celebrity PADI Course Directors.

PADI Instructor Development Courses take place 4 times a year at TPDC with 3 PADI Instructor Examinations in the region.

Come and visit us at DMEX 2011 to find out more about your PADI Professional opportunities!



## PADI COURSE DIRECTOR SHOWCASE

### PHIL O'SHEA – IRISH

Pavilion Dive Centre Manager  
Snowboarding, Loud Music and Band Management

### ERNST VAN DER POLL – SOUTH AFRICAN

Pavilion Dive Centre Assistant Manager  
Surfing, Philanthropist and Environmentalist

### GRANT GRAVES – AMERICAN

President, Scuba and Film Enterprises, USA  
FBI Diver trainer, Cinematographer for Discovery and Animal Planet Channels

### LUKE INMAN – BRITISH

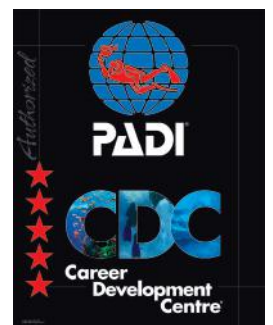
PADI Course Director, Mexico  
Photographer, Cinematographer and Adventurer

### PAUL TOOMER – BRITISH

Owner of Diving Matrix, Malta  
Bikes, Tattoos, Drums and Technical Diving Instructor

### CAMILLE LEMMENS – DUTCH

PADI Course Director, Thailand  
'The Running Man'

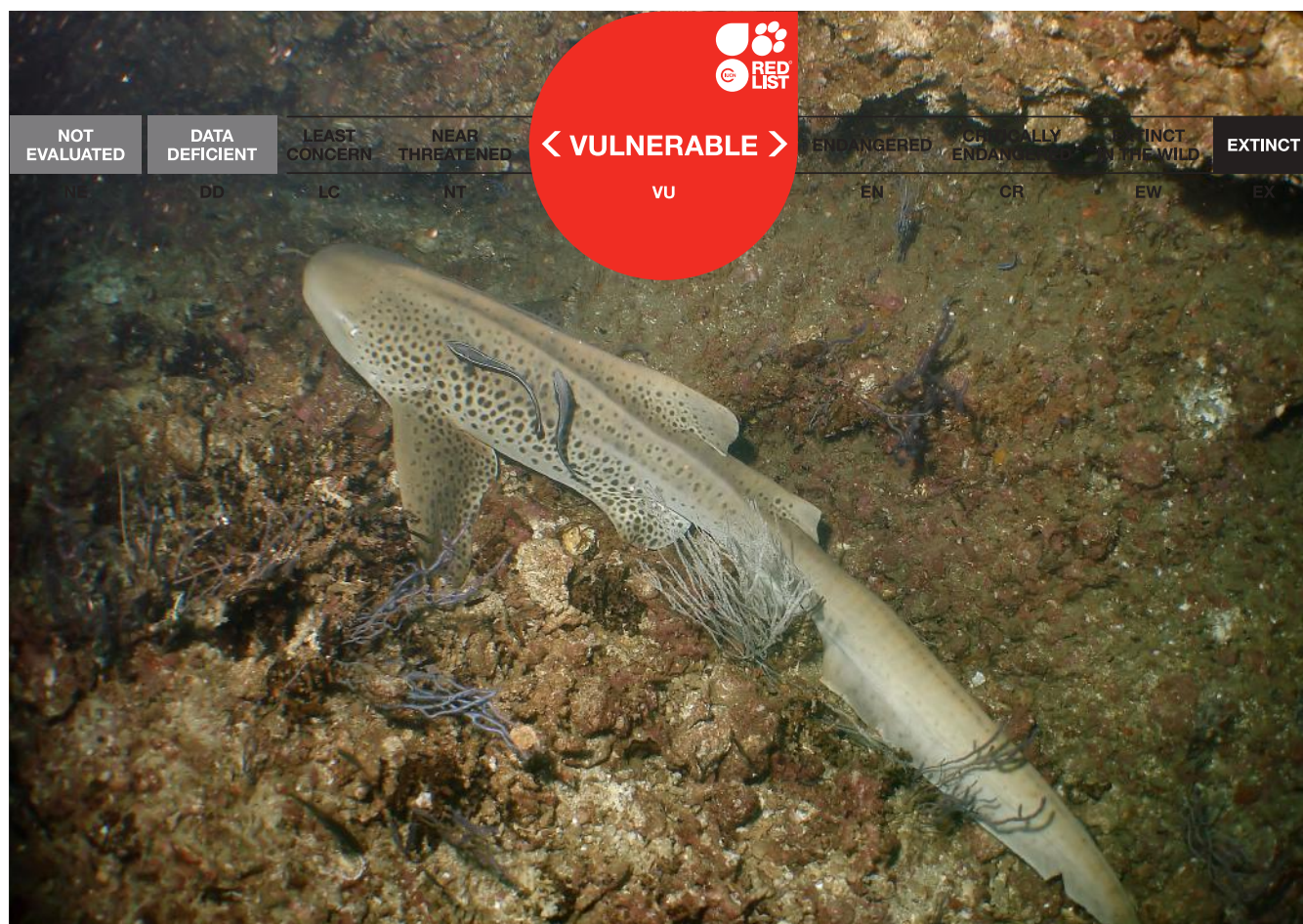


# FEATURED CREATURE

## LEOPARD SHARK

(*Stegostoma fasciatum*)

FEATURE IUCN RED LIST 2010 – PILANS, R & SIMPFENDORFER, C. PHOTOGRAPHY PHILIPPE LECOMTE



### Local Species in the IUCN Red List 2010

#### RED LIST CATEGORY & CRITERIA: **VULNERABLE**

Scientific Name: *Stegostoma fasciatum*

Common Names: Leopard Shark, Zebra Shark

**Justification:** A broadly distributed continental and insular shelf species of the Indian, west and central Pacific Oceans. Usually found within a narrow band of shallow coral reef habitat and soft bottom (to 62 m), that is heavily fished throughout all its range except Australia. Taken in inshore fisheries (demersal trawls, floating and fixed bottom gillnets and baited hooks) and seen in fish markets in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Pakistan, India, Taiwan, and elsewhere. There are limited data on population declines in these areas, with the exception of the Gulf of Thailand, but the species is susceptible to local inshore fisheries and coral reef habitat loss and damage because of its habitat preferences and limited dispersion.

In Australia, where this species is abundant, has a wide distribution and is captured only in very small numbers in prawn trawls, it is assessed as Least Concern.

**Geographic Range:** Inshore waters of the continental and insular shelves. Occurs in tropical, shallow inshore and offshore waters near the bottom; often found on and around coral reefs and on sandy plateaus near coral, at depths down to at least 62m.

**Native:** Australia (New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia); Bahrain; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia (Irian Jaya); Iran, Islamic Republic of; Japan; Kuwait; Madagascar; Malaysia (Sarawak); Maldives; Mozambique; New Caledonia; Oman; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; South Africa; Sri Lanka; Taiwan, Province of China; United Republic of Tanzania; Thailand; United Arab Emirates; Viet Nam; Yemen.

**Population Trend:** Decreasing

**Habitat and Ecology:** Oviparous species. Reproductive periodicity unknown. Size at birth: 20 to 36 cm total length (TL). Average litter size unknown. Size maturity: 147 to 183 cm TL (male), 169 to 171 cm TL (female). Maximum size at least 235 cm TL. Growth rates unknown.

**Major Threats:** Threats within Australia are likely to be minimal, no target fisheries. Potentially susceptible to capture by prawn trawls, however very few are reported in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Mark Tonks, CSIRO Marine Research, pers. comm. 2003).

Although there is no direct evidence of population decline in the Indo-West Pacific, market surveys suggest this species is much less common than it used to be (L.J.V Compagno and William White, pers. comms. 2003). In the Gulf of Thailand, it was historically more abundant and it may have been adversely affected by the use of explosives and poisons on reefs in the Indian Ocean and western Pacific. Apart from baited hooks, *S. fasciatum*



is susceptible to capture in a wide range of inshore fisheries. This, in combination with a narrow habitat range and limited dispersal makes this species vulnerable to population decline.

**Conservation Actions:** There are currently no conservation measures in place for this species.

**Previous feature creatures:**

**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

- Hawksbill turtle

**NEAR THREATENED**

- Blacktip shark
- Spotted eagle ray
- Bluespotted stingray

**Source:** Pillans, R. & Simpfendorfer, C. 2003. *Stegostoma fasciatum*. In: IUCN 2010. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2010.4.

[www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)



## THE EARTH CHARTER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION NETWORK

**ALICIA JIMENEZ**, EARTH CHARTER INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, AND **MUTTASIM AL-HAYARI**, JORDANIAN HASHEMITE FUND FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

On November 23-24, 2010, a special event took place at the Dead Sea, Jordan. Under the patronage of HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), the Ministry of Environment in Jordan, the West Asia Regional Office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Earth Charter International Secretariat organized a celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earth Charter.

During the event, HRH Princess Basma said: "the Earth Charter is in line with our region's culture and lifestyle. Our commitment to the Charter is evident, but we need to do more actions, we need to do what is simply right".



The Earth Charter is a declaration of ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is the result of a decade-long participatory dialogue process between individuals from all over the world, representing a great variety of cultures, religions and sectors. All of them contributed to identify those values and principles that would help us as humanity to move towards sustainability. Although it started as a United Nations initiative, it was carried forward and published as a global civil society initiative under the leadership of the Earth Council and Green Cross.

This Charter, launched in 2000 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, is a vision of hope and a call to action, it seeks to inspire individuals and organizations to make sustainability a reality, its content serve as a road map to help us identify in what direction we should move to have a more sustainable future.

Although the Earth Charter is a powerful document, not too many people know about it in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. That is why, the organizers of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Jordan decided to do something about it, and started the process to create the Earth Charter MENA Network. This Network would basically help to raise awareness about the Earth Charter in the MENA region, and serve as a platform to share experiences and forge collaboration between regional organizations.

Representatives of the participating MENA countries developed and signed the Dead Sea Declaration during the last day of this event in Jordan. This declaration proposes the first steps to create EC MENA Network.

The signatories, including HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, expressed their commitment to the Earth Charter and the principles it embodies: respect and care for the community of life; ecological integrity; social and economic justice; and the ideals of democracy, non violence and peace.

So far, the countries represented in this network are: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Representatives came from governmental, international and non-governmental Organizations.



There was an agreement to have JOHUD as the coordinating entity for this network, who will be in close communication with the members and ECI Secretariat, located in Costa Rica, Central America.

To make this network operational, JOHUD is planning to first create a steering committee that will set up the criteria and steps to invite new members. In addition, they are in the process of developing a website that would allow interaction and sharing of experiences and ideas between different practitioners of the region.

The Emirates Diving Association is one of the organizations who have initially committed to create this network, it is expected that EDA members would benefit from this network, by sharing the organization's activities and find instances of collaboration with other like-minded organizations in the region.

There is still a lot to do to make our world a more just, peaceful and sustainable place, this requires a change of mind and heart, a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. The choice is ours. We hope that the Earth Charter MENA Network would facilitate the transition to sustainability in the region, unifying efforts with many more committed individuals and organizations that care for more just and peaceful social systems in the midst of a healthy environment.

## NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES NEWS



At Nomad we have been very busy with some very special unique offers and exciting news. We are launching a liveaboard on our 32 meter sailboat and will be offering our first trip at the end of March. The boat features six cabins all ensuite with double beds and a single bed and with air conditioning.

Currently, the boat is being used by Jonathan Ali Khan to shoot a documentary entitled, 'Shark Quest Arabia'. Nomad is an official sponsor of the Musandam documentary.

Starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> of March until the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> of May, we will be receiving 'Plongeur du Monde'. 'Plongeur du Monde' is a French non profit association that trains children from Dibba, Oman for free from open water to dive master. 'Plongeur du Monde' offers them possible careers in diving when they reach the dive master level. 'Plongeur du Monde' is currently running projects in Sri Lanka, Martinique and Oman – where the Oman offering is done through Nomad Ocean Adventures. This project is an effort toward helping future generations of fisherman to better understand the need to protect sharks in the Musandam.

We will also have an explosive offer from the 15<sup>th</sup> of March onwards where we will be offering FREE EANX on all our day trip dives to certified nitrox divers.

We will also be offering the nitrox specialty for a very low rate and the specialty will be included in all our open water courses as well as all our advanced courses.



We also now have 3 speedboats, so we will be having 2 boats leaving on Friday mornings at 11:00 and one boat leaving in the afternoon at 13:00. This afternoon trip will allow us to do 3 dives each day, 2 day dives and one night dive! This is great as it means we will be able to dive at night on a regular basis at Lima Rock or Ras Lima.

The Guesthouse in Dibba is still going strong and of course we still offer Mama's amazing home cooked food. We also offer free accommodation and board with every course!

We have been doing a lot at Nomad and our regular guests mean a lot to us, so in an effort to give back to our 'regulars', we have the following offer...

For every diver spending 4 nights with diving packages, we will throw in two free nights accommodation!

In addition, we are now offering all courses in French, German, English and Dutch. So get your gear on and get ready to bubble up this season at Nomad!



# HEAT STRESS TO CARIBBEAN CORALS IN 2005 WORST ON RECORD CARIBBEAN REEF ECOSYSTEMS MAY NOT SURVIVE REPEATED STRESS

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY NOAA

Coral reefs suffered record losses as a consequence of high ocean temperatures in the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean in 2005 according to the most comprehensive documentation of basin-scale bleaching to date. Collaborators from 22 countries report that more than 80 percent of surveyed corals bleached and over 40 percent of the total surveyed died, making this the most severe bleaching event ever recorded in the basin. The study appears in PLoS ONE, an international, peer-reviewed, open-access, online publication.

Satellite-based tools from NOAA's Coral Reef Watch Program guided site selection for field observations conducted across the greater Caribbean region from June to October 2005. Field surveys of bleaching and mortality in this study surpass prior efforts in both detail and extent.

This study also substantially raised the standards for documenting the effects of bleaching and for testing satellite and forecast products. Coral bleaching occurs when stress causes corals to expel their symbiotic algae, or zooxanthellae. If prolonged or particularly severe, it may result in coral death.

"Heat stress during the 2005 event exceeded any observed in the Caribbean in the prior 20 years, and regionally-averaged temperatures were the warmest in at least 150 years," said C. Mark Eakin, Ph.D., coordinator of NOAA's Coral Reef Watch Program. "This severe, widespread bleaching and mortality will undoubtedly have long-term consequences for reef ecosystems, and events like this are likely to become more common as the climate warms."

Through this survey, several species and localities reported bleaching for the first time, including the first known bleaching of any kind in Saba, the first documented mass bleaching at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, and the first reported mass bleaching in Virgin Islands National Park of *Acropora palmata*, a species listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 2006.

The Caribbean is suffering severe bleaching again this year, and in some locations, this bleaching event is worse than the event in 2005. Not only are temperatures causing further damage to reefs hit hard during the 2005 event, but new locations have also been impacted.

The decline and loss of coral reefs has significant social, cultural, economic and

ecological impacts on people and communities throughout the world. As the "rainforests of the sea," coral reefs provide economic services – jobs, food and tourism – estimated to be worth as much as \$375 billion each year.

This research was supported by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. Its research and monitoring program covers all shallow-water and deep-water coral reef ecosystems under the jurisdiction of the United States and is intended to inform resource managers, scientists, policymakers and the public.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources.



NOAA diver with a one square meter quadrat examining a bleached reef (*Montastraea*) colony in St. Croix, USVI in October 2005.

Bleached reef colony in Cozumel, Mexico – Paradise Reef (October 2006).



# CORAL REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

FEATURE **CORIS** – NOAA'S CORAL REEF INFORMATION SYSTEMS



**CORAL SPAWNING** Photo by Cynthia Wong/Marine Photobank

Over the eons many corals have evolved with the ability to reproduce both asexually and sexually. In asexual reproduction, new clonal polyps bud off from parent polyps to expand or begin new colonies. This occurs when the parent polyp reaches a certain size and divides. The process continues throughout the animal's life, forming an ever-expanding colony.

The nature of sexual reproduction among corals varies by species. About three-quarters of all stony corals form hermaphroditic colonies. These colonies have the ability to produce both male and female gametes. The remainder form gonochoristic colonies which can produce either male or female gametes, but not both. The sexuality of corals; whether hermaphroditic or gonochoristic – tends to be consistent within species and genera, although there are exceptions.

As a predominantly sessile group of organisms, about three-quarters of all stony corals employ broadcast spawning to distribute their offspring over a broad geographic area. These corals release massive numbers of eggs and sperm into the water column. The gametes fuse in the water column to form planktonic larvae (planulae). A moderately-sized colony may produce up to several thousand planulae per year. Large numbers of planulae are produced to compensate for the many hazards they inevitably will encounter as they are carried through the water. The time between planulae formation and settlement is a period of exceptionally high mortality among corals. In contrast, some coral species brood planulae within their bodies after internal fertilization. While spawning is associated with

high numbers of eggs and planulae, brooding results in fewer, larger and better-developed planulae

Planulae swim upward toward the light (positive phototaxis) to enter the surface waters and be transported by the current. This behaviour is observed not only in nature but in laboratory experiments as well. After floating at the surface for some time, the planulae swim back down to the bottom, where, if conditions are favourable, they will settle and begin a new colony. In most species, the larvae settle within two days, although some will swim for up to three weeks, and in one known instance, two months.

Once the planulae settle, mortality rates drop steadily as they metamorphose into polyps and form colonies which increase in size. The new colony becomes sexually mature at a minimum size, depending on the species. Some massive species, like *Favia doreyensis*, reach sexual maturity when polyps grow to about 10 cm in diameter, which occurs when they are about eight years old. However, some faster-growing, branching corals, including species of *Acropora*, *Pocillipora*, and *Stylophora*, reach sexual maturity at a younger age.

## SPAWNING EVENTS

Among sessile corals, the timing of the mass release of gametes into the water column (broadcast spawning event) is very important because males and females cannot move into reproductive contact. Spawning species must release their gametes into the water simultaneously. Because colonies may be separated by wide distances, this release must

be both precisely and broadly synchronized, and is usually done in response to multiple environmental cues.

The long-term control of spawning (control of the maturation of gonads) may be related to temperature, day length and/or rate of temperature change (either increasing or decreasing). The short-term (getting ready to spawn) control is usually based on lunar cues. The final release, or spawn, is usually based on the time of sunset. Cues also may be biological (involving chemical messengers) or physical.

Brooding species can store unfertilized eggs for weeks, and thus, require less synchrony for fertilization. Spawning species require synchrony within a time frame of hours. This regional synchrony varies geographically. In Australia's Great Barrier Reef, more than 100 of the 400 plus species of corals spawn simultaneously within a few nights during spring or early summer. Studies have shown that coral species can form hybrids through mass spawning. Such observations have led to the theory of reticulate evolution whereas modern coral species came about not through the separation of new species along different lineages, but rather through a continual process of separation and fusion.

In western Australia and the Flower Garden Banks of the northern Gulf of Mexico, spawning occurs in late summer or fall, and not necessarily simultaneously. In the northern Red Sea, none of the major coral species reproduce at the same time. In addition, individual corals do not necessarily breed every year. Evidence indicates that slow-growing, longer-lived corals are less likely to spawn every year than faster-growing, shorter-lived species.



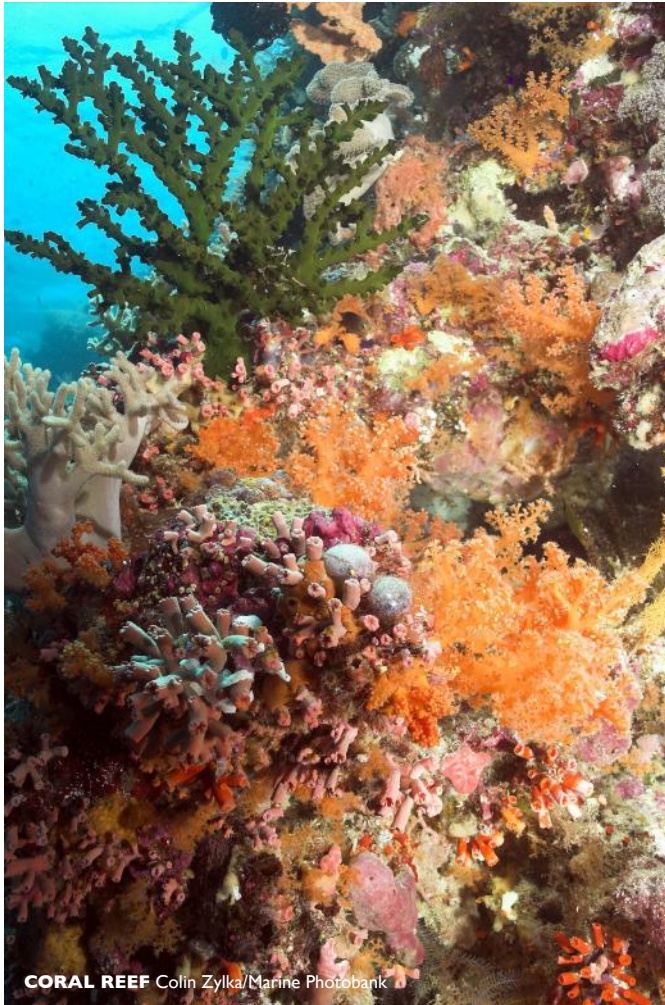
**CORAL SPAWNING STUDY** Photo by Valeria Pizarro/Marine Photobank.

To study coral population dynamics coral reproduction must be included. Few hours prior coral spawning traps are installed to collect gamete bundles (eggs and sperm).



# FROM POLYP TO REEF

FEATURE CORIS – NOAA'S CORAL REEF INFORMATION SYSTEMS



CORAL REEF Colin Zylka/Marine Photobank

Massive reef structures are formed when each stony coral polyp secretes a skeleton of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ . Most stony corals have very small polyps, averaging 1 to 3 mm in diameter; but entire colonies can grow very large and weigh several tons. Although all corals secrete  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , not all are reef builders. Some corals, such as *Fungia* sp., are solitary and have single polyps that can grow as large as 25 cm in diameter. Other coral species are incapable of producing sufficient quantities of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  to form reefs. Many of these corals do not rely on the algal metabolites produced by zooxanthellae, and live in deeper and/or colder waters beyond the geographic range of most reef systems.

The skeletons of stony corals are secreted by the lower portion of the polyp. This process produces a cup, called the calyx, in which the polyp sits. The walls surrounding the cup are called the theca, and the floor is called the basal plate. Thin, calcareous septa (sclerosepta), which provide structural integrity, protection, and an increased surface area for the polyp's soft tissues, extend upward from the basal plate and radiate outward from its centre. Periodically, a polyp will lift off its base and secrete a new floor to its cup, forming a new basal plate above the old one. This creates a minute chamber in the skeleton. While the colony is alive,  $\text{CaCO}_3$  is deposited, adding partitions and elevating the coral. When polyps are physically stressed, they contract into the calyx so that virtually no part is exposed above the skeletal platform. This protects the organism from predators and the elements.

At other times, the polyp extends out of the calyx. The timing and extent to which a polyp extends from its protective skeleton often

depends on the time of the day, as well as the species of coral. Most polyps extend themselves furthest when they feed on plankton at night.

In addition to a substantial horizontal component, the polyps of colonial corals are connected laterally to their neighbors by a thin horizontal sheet of tissue called the coenosarc, which covers the limestone between the calyxes. Together, polyps and coenosarc constitute a thin layer of living tissue over the block of limestone they have secreted. Thus, the living colony lies entirely above the skeleton.

Colonies of reef-building (hermatypic) corals exhibit a wide range of shapes, but most can be classified within ten general forms. Branching corals have branches that also have (secondary) branches. Digitate corals look like fingers or clumps of cigars and have no secondary branches. Table corals are table-like structures of fused branches. Elkhorn coral has large, flattened branches. Foliose corals have broad plate-like portions rising above the substrate. Encrusting corals grow as a thin layer against the substrate. Submassive corals have knobs, columns or wedges protruding from an encrusting base. Massive corals are ball-shaped or boulder-like corals which may be small as an egg or large as a house. Mushroom corals resemble the attached or unattached tops of mushrooms. Cup corals look like egg cups or cups that have been squashed, elongated or twisted. While the growth patterns of stony coral colonies are primarily species-specific, a colony's geographic location, environmental factors (e.g., wave action, temperature, light exposure), and the density of surrounding corals may affect and/or alter the shape of the colony as it grows.

In addition to affecting the shape of a colony's growth, environmental factors influence the rates at which various species of corals grow. One of the most significant factors is sunlight. On sunny days, the calcification rates of corals can be twice as fast as on cloudy days. This is likely a function of the symbiotic zooxanthellae algae, which play a unique role in enhancing the corals' ability to synthesize calcium carbonate. Experiments have shown that rates of calcification slow significantly when zooxanthellae are removed from corals, or when corals are kept in shade or darkness.

In general, massive corals tend to grow slowly, increasing in size from 0.5 cm to 2 cm per year. However, under favorable conditions (high light exposure, consistent temperature, moderate wave action), some species can grow as much as 4.5 cm per year. In contrast to the massive species, branching colonies tend to grow much faster. Under favorable conditions, these colonies can grow vertically by as much as 10 cm per year. This fast growth rate is not as advantageous as it may seem, however. Mechanical constraints limit the maximum size that branching corals can achieve. As they become larger, a heavier load is placed on the relatively small area attached to the substratum, rendering the colony increasingly unstable. Under these circumstances, the branches are prone to snapping off during strong wave action. The opposite is true of the massive-shaped corals, which become more stable as they grow larger.



HARD CORAL © Pete Faulkner, Mission:awareness/Marine Photobank

# BRUNEI TO MONITOR NEW MPA NETWORK WITH REEF CHECK

ARTICLE REEF CHECK'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. GREGOR HODGSON



Brunei Darussalam is a tiny nation nestled between the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah on the historic island of Borneo. The country has an area of only 5,265 sq km and a population of about 400,000. High diversity coral reefs are found throughout the South China Sea within Brunei waters. During the past 20 years, Brunei has focused on economic development, particularly oil and natural gas, and has the highest per capita GDP of any country in Asia (US\$50,000).

In 2009, after Brunei was invited to join the Coral Triangle Project, the Brunei Fisheries Department sought to document its coral reef resources and to protect them. In 2009, two books were published by the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources – 'Coral Reefs of Brunei Darussalam' and 'Reef Fishes of Brunei Darussalam' that document more than 400 coral species and more than 600 reef fishes found in Brunei waters by teams led by Gerald Allen and Lyndon Devantier.

This year, the Fisheries Department under the leadership of Director (Ms.) Hajah Hasnah binti Ibrahim, requested Reef Check to train a team of EcoDivers so that they could establish a regular monitoring program leading up to creating a network of marine protected areas. During November 2010, I invited Reef Check Malaysia Director Julian Hyde to help me to train up a diverse and enthusiastic group of 15 fisheries staff, dive shop instructors, commercial and recreational divers to become EcoDivers. Coming from different backgrounds, the participants were able to add very different perspectives on marine monitoring and management. They even got a "free" oxygen seminar from the commercial diver during a coffee break.

Following the standard one-day classroom session, we spent the next three days practicing surveys and ultimately completing one survey at Pelong Rock, just a short boat ride from the harbor. With annual rainfall

in Brunei averaging 3 m (more than nine feet), there is a lot of runoff and sediment. As a result, high turbidity is common. While text books on coral reefs typically list the "requirement" for clear water, the reality is that many corals live happily in turbid water, and Brunei reef corals are no exception, with very large colonies of the massive growth forms of Porites and table corals (Acropora) – several meters in diameter. As usual in highly diverse reef systems, a great deal of time is spent teaching participants what is not a Reef Check indicator as well as what should be included. Like most teams, everyone loves the hand signals for communicating substrate types – thanks to Dr. Al Licuanan of RC Philippines and Kim Obermeyer of RC Thailand for developing them. (Hint to old Reef Checkers – ask for a new training disk).

Julian has pioneered a number of kid's education initiatives on the islands of Malaysia. A former dive shop owner and scuba instructor, he was the perfect partner for this training – focusing on buoyancy issues in the water and presenting information on the kids programs in neighboring Malaysia.

The final day of the training was spent on designing a draft monitoring program for the nation's reefs. The group was able to design a program that would allow them to monitor all of their major reefs with replicate surveys using only two survey days per month at about 70 reef sites. The end of the training was marked by a ceremony hosted by the Ministry and plenty of great food. In 2011, Brunei will be opening its new coral reef education center and launching its first round of Reef Check surveys.

If your MPA or region would like to set up a monitoring program, Reef Check offers training that includes a Climate Change Monitoring Tool Kit. Contact: [ecodiver@reefcheck.org](mailto:ecodiver@reefcheck.org)





## FIRST ECODIVERS TRAINED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Dr. Mohammed Kotb of PERSGA (the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden) recently certified 11 divers representing the Presidency of the Meteorology and Environment Protection, the official authority in Saudi Arabia concerned with environmental protection. Training began three months ago as part of PERSGA's rigorous training program that includes marine background information, advanced diving skills, underwater photography, and survey techniques. PERSGA is carrying out this training program to increase the skilled governmental capacities in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Region. The trained groups will then be able to implement underwater damage/status assessment and monitoring tasks. PERSGA is aiming to offer this program to the national marine environmental specialists in the other five countries of the region (Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen).



First EcoDivers Trained in Saudi Arabia. Photo by PERSGA.

## COREMO LAUNCHES NEW SOFTWARE

The CoReMo project (for Coral Reef Monitoring) recently launched a new version of its software, CoReMo 3. The software is designed to enable scientific and non-scientific operators to monitor coral reef health and provides a common database for all stakeholders in charge of reef monitoring activities, including the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), Reef Check, and IFRECOR (French Coral Reef Initiative).

CoReMo 3 was designed to develop simple, effective, standardized protocols to monitor benthic populations (fixed and mobile fauna), fish and stress indicators. The protocols are adapted to the local operators' level of expertise (Basic, Intermediate or Expert). There are forms for entering, consulting, modifying and exporting field data and data analyses in the form of charts and tables.

The CoReMo project is developed by ARVAM and funded under an agreement with IFRECOR, Réunion Regional Council, and the European Union with additional support from CRISP. For more information, visit <http://www.coremo3.com>.



# REEF CHECK EGYPT 2011 ECODIVER SCHEDULE

Reef Check Egypt is offering many opportunities in 2011 for certification as a Reef Check EcoDiver. Reef Check partners, Red Sea Diving Safari (RSDS) and the Red Sea Environmental Center (RSEC) have the following trainings already on the schedule:

**February 3-7, 2011:** RSDS EcoDiver course at Red Sea Diving Safari, Marsa Shagra.

**April 16-29, 2011:** RSEC Easter Reef Check - 2-weeks with Reef Check EcoDiver Training; includes accommodation, 20 dives, airport shuttle, 1 boat trip 700€.

**August 18 – September 29, 2011:** RSEC Dahab Reef Monitoring & Reef Conservation Project.

Extended Reef Check and coral reef surveys and local conservation measures in Dahab; Long-term volunteers (6 weeks, preferably students of biology or related field) and short-term volunteers wanted! 2 week participation possible any time within the schedule period. 6 Weeks – includes accommodation, 40 dives, airport shuttle, 2 boat trips for 880€ 2 weeks – includes accommodation, 20 dives, airport shuttle, 1 boat trip for 730€

**August 25 – October 3, 2011:** RSEC Reef Monitoring Quseir.

Extended Reef Check and coral reef surveys and local conservation measures 6 weeks – includes board and lodging (basic), 40 dives, airport shuttles, 1 boat trip for 850€.

RSEC will also be offering a new EcoExpedition to the Seychelles. Details will be available soon.

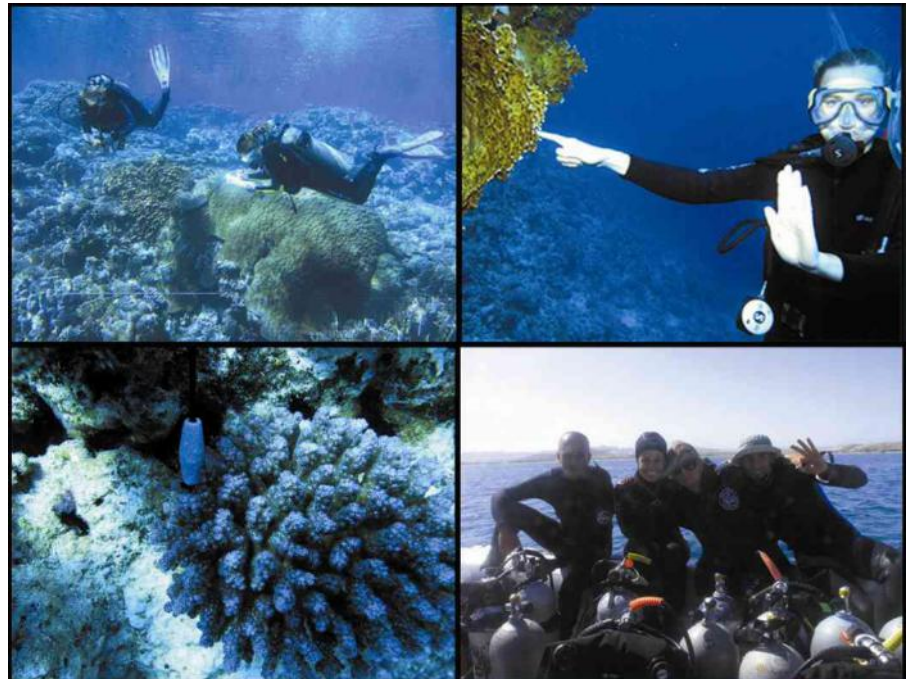


Photo by Stephan Moldzio

## NEW ADDITIONS TO SEA STORE

Reef Check enters 2011 with two new exciting products! Show your support and spread the word by wearing one of our great wristbands and sporting one of our beach towels the next time you hit the shore. You can feel good knowing you have made a valuable contribution to a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting our coral reefs.

The beach towel is 100% cotton and measures 5.5 feet x 3 feet.

And for Reef Check EcoDivers, you can tie your plumb line to the wristband during your tropical substrate surveys!





# HONG KONG CORALS STABLE

FEATURE **AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**



The results of Hong Kong Reef Check 2010 showed that local corals are generally in a healthy and stable condition, and exhibit a rich diversity of species.

In collaboration with the Reef Check Foundation, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has coordinated an annual survey of Hong Kong's corals since 2000. The number of participants reached a record high this year, with 528 volunteer divers in 44 Reef Check teams from different sectors, including education institutes, green groups, commercial sectors, government departments and diving groups.

The Chairman of the Marine Parks Committee, Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing, commended the participating teams for their zealous support and contribution to the success of Hong Kong Reef Check 2010, and presented them with souvenirs at an award presentation ceremony held December 4.

The three month survey, which started on June 3, covered extensive marine areas, including 33 sites of ecological importance in the eastern part of Hong Kong waters extending from Tung Ping Chau in the north to Ninepin Groups in the south, and including three marine parks – Hoi Ha Wan, Yan Chau Tong and Tung Ping Chau.

The survey results are encouraging. In general, the growth of corals in Hong Kong is stable and healthy. Indicator species are abundant in most of the survey sites. A variation in coral coverage (ranging from 30% to 78.1%) was recorded among 33 survey sites. Twenty-one of them, including dive sites within the marine parks, recorded a high coral coverage (above 50%). Among all sites, the public pier, Coral Beach at Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park and Sharp Island North recorded the highest coral coverage (ranging from 73% to 78.1%).

Most of the survey sites boast high species diversity. Of the 20 assigned indicator species, 19 were recorded, which is the same as last year. Wrasses, groupers, butterfly fish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers and cowries were species commonly found in the survey sites.

The Coral Watch bleaching monitoring system has been included in the Reef Check surveys since 2005 to enhance the monitoring of coral health status. By measuring the color intensity of the coral using a specially designed chart, the health condition of corals can be determined.

Corals at 11 sites were assessed using Coral Watch this year. The average health index was 4.54 (ranging from 3.71 to 5.69). The results were similar to last year's (4.31). The average health index is well above the general average value (3), indicating the corals were in healthy and stable conditions.

Coral bleaching and some coral damage were observed at a few sites but the impact was minor and localized.

Corals form a highly productive system that supports various marine organisms by providing food and shelter. The AFCD will continue to organize Reef Check activities to collect important information necessary for devising conservation and management measures to protect the precious corals. For more information, please see AFCD's Reef Check website.





## 2011 ECOEXPEDITIONS WITH BIOSPHERE EXPEDITIONS

Biosphere Expeditions recently added a brand new EcoExpedition to the Maldives for 2011, to go along with their continuing EcoExpeditions to Honduras and Oman. Reserve your spot today! Each trip includes the Reef Check EcoDiver training course.

### CAYOS COCHINOS, HONDURAS

**Expedition dates:** March 6 – March 18 or March 20 – April 1 (12 nights)

Biosphere Expeditions promotes sustainable conservation of the planet's wildlife by involving the public in real hands-on wildlife research and conservation expeditions alongside scientists who are at the forefront of conservation work. In Honduras, Biosphere Expeditions is surveying the coral reefs of the Cayos Cochinos marine protected area. The Cayos Cochinos form part of the world's second largest barrier reef system, known as the Meso-American Barrier Reef, and have been identified as one of the key sections of the barrier reef system to preserve. Data from this survey will be compared to that of other parts of the Meso-American Barrier Reef System and to reefs worldwide.

For more information: <http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/honduras>

### MALDIVES

**Expedition Dates:** September 3 – 9 or September 10 – 16 (6 nights)

Many reefs in the Maldives are in a relatively pristine state and of high aesthetic quality. The Maldives Marine Research Station of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture identified a need for further research and monitoring work as far back as 1997. Biosphere Expeditions is addressing this need and is working with Reef Check and the Marine Conservation Society in order to provide vital data on reef health. During transfers between the Reef Check dive sites, the expedition will also endeavour to record the presence or absence of whale sharks from the vessel.

For more information: <http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/maldives>

### MUSANDAM, OMAN

**Expedition Dates:** October 9 – 15 or October 16 – 22 (6 nights)

This EcoExpedition will take you to the United Arab Emirates and from there to the remote and mountainous Musandam peninsula of Oman. There you will study the diverse coral reefs fringing the areas where the mountains plunge into the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. This is a pioneering study to map this currently unprotected underwater environment. The reefs boast a rich mixture of beautiful corals and a multitude of fish and other animals. Data on the current biological status of the reefs and of population levels of key indicator species are therefore crucial for educational purposes and to be able to put forward ideas for future marine protection areas.

For more information: <http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/musandam>



## WHERE'S THE METAL? – WRECK DIVING IN THE UAE

FEATURE **ANGUS CARLISLE**



I normally don't get the chance to read the EDA publication, but last month I had the time to have a really good read of the December 2010 edition. It's rather good, interesting and informative on our Diving Environment in the UAE – really good work guys.

However (there is always a however!) – “Mr Editor – where's the metal?”

Now I freely admit I'm a UK trained diver and the vast majority of my diving life has been in the murk of the English North Sea where the marine life cannot be described as spectacular! Therefore I have not gained much personal interest in fish over the years but show me a bit of underwater metal and my ingrained instinct starts to show some activity.

Apart from a number of notable exceptions in the UK – Scapa Flow being one – metal diving – I really mean wreck diving – has an added feature that many of the wrecks have been previously attended to by the Royal Navy with drag cables and explosives to remove any potential hazard to shipping. This resulting in wrecks that are often no more than a large field of mangled debris, plates here, boilers there and so on. The principal interest in the UK is that there are hundreds of these diving sites spreading back over time because of the maritime history of the UK and some of them are really good dives.

So then we come to the UAE – it's clear in a historical way that we would not expect to find the same number of wrecks as in the UK – but we do have an abundance available to us recreational divers and with the significant feature that they have not been cable dragged or blown up.

Believe me when I tell you that here in the UAE, us divers are blessed with complete ships and other vessels that are in one piece, and on our door step.

Before I go any further in this article I'll take a moment to remind divers to get properly trained and ensure they know what they are doing before they undertake wreck diving, even diving around the outside can present hazards that need careful thought e.g. nets (and monofilament ones at that). You know it makes sense so don't get pushed into something that's beyond your current skill and knowledge set.

At DSDC I will typically advise enquiring divers to expect the west coast to deliver wreck diving in abundance and to various degrees of difficulty, to name a few – Turtle Barge, Nasteran, Barracuda Barge, Mariam Express, Neptune, Zainab, Ludvig, Jassim, Lion City and the Energy Determination are names that easily roll off the tongue. On the East Coast

I would suggest divers expect scenic diving with lots of marine life and in some places rather hairy fast moving currents – however we can also name the Inchcape Wrecks, Innis, Anita and U533 as all being very interesting places to visit 'over there' – if you have got the correct level of training for the 60 metre plus diving required.

There we go then, in one sentence we roll off the names of some 16 wrecks and where at least 10 of them are complete vessels offering interesting possibilities to those so minded.

So how can and what do these UAE wrecks offer those of us who live here and those who visit on holiday.

I'm sure we will all acknowledge that the bottom of the Arabian gulf is a pretty boring place with mostly sand and silt extending for miles upon miles – nothing to see and nothing to do. Yes there are some super deep water reefs but they are not well known or accessible. Stick a wreck on the bottom and all sorts of things start happening, huge shoals of fish arrive to benefit from the protection and feeding opportunities, turtles turn up and find some where to sleep, dolphins feed on the fish, barracudas feed (on divers?), sea snakes appear – I'm never sure what they do – rays hide in the sand, and occasionally a travelling shark passes by. Fishermen turn up with their hooks, nets and pots. Divers turn up with their tanks, cameras, instructors and the authorities turn up with their marker buoys. Once a bit of boring old water on top of a bit of boring old sand is now a centre for a huge amount of remarkable activity and in so many ways meeting the objectives of improving our environment.

As for the divers – I've already mentioned the tanks, cameras and instructors and with these tools we then have the opportunity to spend hours of enjoyment at these places, getting to know them, getting to love and care for them and extolling their virtues to other divers with whom we share our passion. As we build our own knowledge and skills in our sport these familiar places retain their interest and excitement and eventually when you get yourself to the dizzy height of instructing our sport you can share you knowledge with the newcomers to our underwater world.

My own diving progression at these dive sites – I started diving in the Arabian Gulf in 1992 – came first with many dives around the outside of the different sites, understanding the layouts, the marine life, the different conditions as they change during the years, including the considerable deterioration of the Jasim over the last 20.



Progression came in the form of wreck penetration – careful reel work and line laying to find out how many washing machines are inside the Neptune, what's the size of the TV inside the Zainab, what's obviously missing in the Ludvig engine room – all this followed with the introduction of a video camera to join me on my travels (see [http://www.desertsportsdivingclub.net/video\\_gallery.htm](http://www.desertsportsdivingclub.net/video_gallery.htm) if you are interested – noting I'm an amateur at this, even though I enjoy it immensely). To progress further I'm starting on my re-breather training with Glenn Campbell at Coastal Technical Divers in January – I'm looking forward to the three hour dives with no bubbles!

This article is not necessarily an invitation to go looking for the washing machines in the Neptune – you need to ensure you know what you are doing first – (this is not some sound bite, we have first hand experience of why this is very necessary) – my objective is to extol the virtues of what we have right here in Dubai, on our doorstep.

I'll go a little further and say don't think that one dive on the Zainab does not mean 'that's it you have done "it" – for example at DSDC there are divers who have visited the Zainab 60 or more times and who now know the inside and outside layout of that ship better than their own bedroom at home – and they

continue to go back to it because it never stops changing.

So what is it about the UAE wreck diver – perhaps you've done one dive and don't quite "get" or understand the excitement?

As a general observation having watched groups of divers descend past me during my many, many decompression stops – take a torch, the biggest you can get – if you don't the world of wrecks are colourless and grey – light up with a torch to both see the colour and other things you did not see before – perhaps even the ships bell peeking out from the sand! Take a camera and get up close – at DSDC there are a couple of members who have these small cameras but will regularly pick a dive and take 200 or more photos in 50 minutes underwater – some of them are superb – (have a look at them via <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Desert-Sports-Diving-Club-1339/279467540004> – these could easily be your photos) and of course, just to get the point across once again – get some good training.

And what about the environment – we all know and discuss frequently the damage being caused by over fishing and depletion of stock. We all realise that a decent wreck on the bottom of a bit of boring old sea bed can improve the marine habitat a thousand fold in

that particular area. Do you think this might justify the sinking of a few more? Nice thought don't you think?

Hopefully and if you are minded to – you are now off to get some training, build up your experience and really start to explore the UAE World of Shipwrecks and, by the way – If you happen to see me and my camera, give a nice wave as you go past, it makes the video much more interesting.



Angus Carlisle is the current Chairman of Desert Sports Diving Club (DSDC) in Dubai and BSAC Branch 1339. He is a BSAC Advanced Diver and Advanced Instructor. He started diving in 1987, first coming to the UAE in 1992 where he lived in Abu Dhabi and dived with ADSAC. He started instructing in 1993 and became an Advanced Instructor in 1995. He is a member of BSAC's Instructor Training Scheme and has worked closely with the BSAC National Diving Officer helping to develop BSAC instructors and the sport of underwater diving. He is a previous Chairman of Excalibur Sub Aqua Club in the UK.

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# SHARKWATCH ARABIA UPDATE WHALE SHARKS DISAPPEAR FOR WINTER

FEATURE **DAVID P. ROBINSON, JONATHAN ALI KHAN & WARREN BAVERSTOCK**

PHOTOGRAPHY **WARREN BAVERSTOCK – [WWW.VERSTODIGITAL.COM](http://WWW.VERSTODIGITAL.COM)**



The last quarter has been very interesting for this study. The winter months have seen the whale sharks almost completely disappear from around the region with only two reported sightings in December. This fact in itself supports the theory of a 'season' for the whale shark within the Arabian Gulf and Musandam region of Oman. Remote satellite imagery has shown that sea surface temperatures (SST) within the Musandam dropped to around 22°C in mid-January, whilst in-water temperatures in the Emirate of Dubai reached a low of around 16°C. Factors affected by water temperature such as zooplankton density could be an explanation for the disappearance of the sharks; time will tell and we hope to build up a better picture in the upcoming years.

In January of this year the Sharkwatch Arabia team spent time on expedition with Dr David Rowat from the Marine Conservation Society Seychelles (MCSS) who had organised a team of international scientists to research the aggregation of whale sharks found off the coast of Djibouti. The experience was invaluable and a lot was learned about data collection and working with a high density of whale sharks.

February 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 saw Jonathan Ali Khan's Musandam research expedition set off from Dibba port for a month of shark related research. Sharkwatch Arabia provided two satellite tags for the expedition that were kindly sponsored by Emirates Diving Association and Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach resort, further information about the expedition and tagging will be given in the next update. In the meantime if you are a diver keep your eyes peeled for the reappearance of the whale sharks and please report any encounters.

### MANY THANKS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals for their support and for sending in sightings to Sharkwatch Arabia: Chris Chellapermal and Nick White.

If you or your company would like to sponsor a satellite tag then please get in touch via the Sharkwatch Arabia website. If you encounter a whale shark in this region, please visit [www.sharkwatcharabia.com](http://www.sharkwatcharabia.com) and report your sighting.





## MK VI POSEIDON REBREATHER FOR RECREATION CLOSED-CIRCUIT REBREATHER COURSE

FEATURE JEFFREY C. CATANJAL

” Jeffrey returns from a successful dive  
on the MK VI Poseidon Rebreather ”



Just imagine you are on your last dive on vacation and all of a sudden you see an Eagle Ray cruising your path but you are about to end your dive because of your air consumption result. You try and get closer but every time you get closer, they just swim away each time you exhale.

Well, based on what I have recently experienced while taking my MK VI Poseidon Rebreather Instructor Course, diving with no bubbles, allowing me to swim side by side with an Eagle Ray while taking video and photos and even putting myself in a face to face position to take my best shot on the marine life has always been the greatest experience I've ever had.

Plus, it allows me to dive for 3 hours and 30 minutes without changing my tanks, breathing warm and moist gas, comfortable with regards to buoyancy control and with 199 minutes no decompression time, I can swim with the marine life all day long.

The “quieter” part is not just nice; it can be quite important because of the absence of the usual noisy and visually startling bubbles, it allows a diver to observe underwater life much less obtrusively.

### WHAT IS AN MK VI POSEIDON REBREATHER?

It was December 7, 2010, my day started with the CCR Instructor in the classroom after completing my online rebreather course. It was well explained to me what my unit could do and what is so special about it.

So prior to my pool session I learned that the idea of a rebreather is to recapture some or all of that exhaled gas, process it, and return it back to the diver, with little or no waste. Instead of breathing through a regulator, rebreather divers breathe from a “loop” that directs the exhaled gas into a “counter lung” (a flexible bag that expands to receive the diver's exhaled breath, and collapses when the diver inhales again), through a “scrubber” (a canister containing a granular chemical such as calcium hydroxide, that removes the carbon dioxide from the exhaled gas), and back to the diver to be inhaled again.

At some point in the loop, oxygen is added to replenish that which is metabolized by the diver. In short, a diver consumes oxygen and expires carbon dioxide; and a rebreather chemically removes the carbon dioxide, replaces the oxygen that was removed, and returns the gas to the diver. One advantage

of these loops: it is much more pleasurable to breathe warm moist gas (recycled) than to inhale cold dry gas.

What is so special about my MK VI Poseidon Rebreather unit is that it has 4 separate micro processors.

The 1<sup>st</sup> micro processor is called the back pack processor located on top of the canister that measures the oxygen in the controller; fire solenoids, run decompression calculations and so on.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> micro processor can be found inside the battery located on top of the rebreather head. It basically does 3 things; store dive logs, sets off an alarm and has led signals that flash during alarm.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> micro processor is the Heads Up Display (HUD) which can be found on top of the mouth piece. It has led and a vibrator to give a warning and the electronics can also detect when you switch on the mouth piece between open and close position which is very important for a control perspective. I believe this is something that has not been seen in other rebreathers.



PADI Vice President Mark Caney, Rebreather Technologies in PADI's Technical Diving Division, announced that PADI will introduce its first rebreather courses to include closed circuit rebreathers this year. Caney said that PADI will produce a range of rebreather courses covering the needs of recreational and technical divers, and that the first courses will become available this year. They will be supported by the usual high quality educational materials that PADI is well known for.

The last piece of electronics is the display which displays everything. The primary means of interfacing to the unit. These 4 processors all communicate together in network, and share information. All information will be sent where it has to be seen.

Obviously if the system is controlled by electronics, the most important thing you want to know is "do the electronics work? And are all the systems working properly?"

The MkVI Poseidon Rebreather has an extensive diagnostic built into it. When you first turn the rig on, it goes through 55 different pre-dive tests and also does an automatic calibration of the oxygen sensors so that prior to diving, you know that those sensors are reading correctly.

## CCR POOL SESSION

With all the rebreather diver candidates, one by one we got into the water and the CCR Instructor worked with us individually to get us submerged and weighted correctly. Just getting underwater with a rebreather takes a lot more weight than I use on an open circuit, and while the CCR Instructor did say that as your experience grows, you can drop some, you will always use more weight, as in his words, 'a CCR is just a big bag of wind attached to you'. A long-time open-circuit diver, I am used to breathing out and sinking, but with the MK VI Poseidon, I had to get used to changing my buoyancy by venting air through my nose, so it bubbled out of the skirt of my mask. I think that was the hardest thing to get used to.

On an open circuit you are able to control your buoyancy by breathing in or breathing out. Here it makes no difference as the air in your lungs just goes into the counter lungs, or back again, so there is no change in your buoyancy whatsoever. Once you've achieved neutral buoyancy, and you are just hanging there with no sound or bubbles, it is an awesome feeling, but it does feel very alien.

We all spent an hour or so in the pool, getting used to the feel of the unit, moving up and down in the water column, switching back

and forth from open circuit to closed circuit, running through a few drills and monitoring the read-out on the display. Once the CCR Instructor was happy that we'd got the hang of it, it was time to move on to open water dives.

## CCR OPEN WATER SESSION

I was fortunate that 3 Course Directors namely Christian Heylen, Dave Griffiths and Mark Caney were present during my open water session, and shared their views and gave some pointers about CCR diving. We were running through a few drills, including switching back and forth between open and closed circuits, going up and dropping down a few meters, and emptying the loop of any loop that had gathered during our breathing cycles until I mastered all the skills required.

We ended the session with a quick swim down the 'road' to 15m, which gave us another chance to work on our buoyancy both descending and ascending, before heading back to the surface for a debrief.

Once we got round to diving with the unit it was no surprise to find that it is very easy to set up and use. Putting the unit together is very straightforward, although to be fair, no easier or faster than some of the better tech CCRs. The use of the Extend Air cartridges, rather than having to pack the scrubber yourself, saves time and effort, but works out slightly more expensive than packing it yourself.

The MK VI Poseidon does have some very clever features. For example, the controller regularly validates each of the oxygen sensors during the dive to detect any problems. Air is flushed over the sensors at regular intervals to check that the reading is as expected. Existing rebreather dives refer to this as a diluent flush, where the whole breathing loop is flushed with the diluent gas so that the diver can check that their cells are reading correctly. Doing this manually has a number of disadvantages. It uses up valuable diluent gas, it takes time, it can affect buoyancy and finally it depends on the diver being able to calculate the readings they expect to see at whatever depth they are at.

However, MK VI Poseidon does this automatically every five minutes using only a tiny amount of gas. This allows the unit to constantly monitor the behavior of the cells. All of this is invisible to the diver and they are only alerted if the unit thinks there is a problem with the cells. It is this constant validation of the cells that allows MK VI Poseidon to use two cells rather than the traditional three or more cells.

After 3 weeks of training with my MK VI Poseidon unit, I am convinced that I made a very good investment to my training and unit as I expected, and I respect the amount of thought and attention to detail that has gone into the design. I'm not sure how big the recreational closed circuit rebreather market is going to be, but whatever the size, MK VI Poseidon is well placed to satisfy that market.

What quickly became clear is that the MK VI Poseidon has adopted a very different approach because Poseidon wanted to build a very different rebreather. They did not want to build a rebreather that would appeal to technical divers, but instead wanted to build one that appealed to recreation divers like me.

Closed-circuit rebreathers have always been seen as something for the elite tech divers, but the MK VI Poseidon Rebreather looks set to change all that, bringing an electronic Closed-circuit rebreather to recreation divers.

No other rebreather is smaller, lighter and more user friendly. The technology takes care of everything but the dive experience...that will be up to you!

So far I have dived with my own MK VI for just over 100 hours and the unit has been extremely safe, fun and very enjoyable to use. As a rebreather instructor with the Rebreather Association of International Divers (RAID), I am one of the first Instructors to teach the MK VI Poseidon Rebreather in the UAE. Visit [www.diverschoice.net](http://www.diverschoice.net) for more information.

PADI intend to release a Poseidon Mk6 / MkVI CIS Lunar Discovery Rebreather Course, that Divers Choice will also be offering when it is released.



# RECORD NUMBER OF TURTLES SAVED BY THE DUBAI TURTLE REHABILITATION PROJECT

FEATURE THE DUBAI TURTLE REHABILITATION PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHY WARREN BAVERSTOCK



Over 200 sick or injured marine turtles have been brought into the DTRP throughout the winter with the project receiving over 45 animals on one day alone in January 2011.

The turtles are brought in from members of the public, companies and supportive environmental organizations such as Emirates Marine Environmental Group (EMEG) who have brought in 39 turtles so far this season.

The majority of the animals that have been stranded are critically endangered juvenile Hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), which according to the IUCN have seen around an 87% drop in the global number of nesting females in the last three generations, a very startling statistic, but, the project has also received an increased number of large green turtles too.

The young hawksbills have been washing up on the shore along the UAE Gulf coastline severely debilitated which is usually manifested by an abnormally heavy epibiont coverage including barnacles of varying species and a large variety of bivalves, worms and anemones. The types of debilitation are varied, some are injuries caused by entanglement or boat strikes, however, the majority are sick rather than injured. Turtles are reptiles and as such are cold-blooded, gaining their body heat from the surrounding environment. Young turtles in particular suffer with the cold sea temperatures experienced within this region during the months of December, January and February, which is when the majority of sick turtles are found. As the temperature drops so does the metabolism of the turtle and with it, its ability to fight infection and remove parasites such as barnacles which would not be a problem in the warmer months.

The DTRP is currently the only project of its kind in the Middle East and Red Sea region. Although it has been running for some years, it was started in its current form by Dubai's Wildlife Protection Office (WPO) in 2004, in collaboration with the Jumeirah Group, Dubai Falcon Clinic, Al Wasl Veterinary Clinic, and the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory (CVRL).

2004 saw the construction of a pre-release turtle holding pen in the waterways of the Madinat Jumeirah, outside the Mina A'Salam hotel. Burj Al Arab's aquarium team is heavily involved in the project with the utilization of the fish quarantine facilities at the hotel as an intensive care recovery facility. In February 2010 a second outdoor enclosure that has been specifically designed for sick turtles is due to open at the Mina A'Salam Hotel which will be accessible to the public. The large enclosures at Mina A'Salam allows the team to monitor the final stages of rehabilitation and feeding behaviour before the turtles are released back into UAE territorial waters. Last year, DTRP has released

42 rehabilitated turtles back into the waters off the coast of Dubai bringing the total released to 110 with many more due to be released later in the coming year when the waters warm up.

Whilst the turtles are held in the outdoor enclosure at Mina A'Salam, they can help to educate the public about the plight of the turtles in the region. There are some turtles that the project has retained on the grounds that they are unlikely to survive in the wild, these animals suffer with varying disorders such as neurological problems, missing limbs and blindness to name a few. These individuals provide a stark illustration of why we should not use the oceans as a dumping ground for our refuse. During 2010, around 1000 students from varying schools in Dubai attended educational talks given by the Burj Al Arab aquarium team and hosted by Al Muna restaurant at Mina A' Salam. During these talks, the students are taught about turtle biology and ecology specific to the Gulf region and how they can help these amazing animals.

Madinat Jumeirah's waterway enclosure, located outside Al Muna restaurant at Mina A'Salam hotel is open to the general public to see at any time. Every Friday at 13:00pm to coincide with the Al Muna brunch, a member of the aquarium team will be at the enclosure to feed the turtles and answer any questions.

If you find a stranded turtle or are interested in our school educational programme, you can contact the Burj Al Arab's aquarium team on **04 301 7198** or e-mail us at [baaaquarium@jumeirah.com](mailto:baaaquarium@jumeirah.com).



The Burj Al Arab Aquarium team working with one of the larger turtles rescued this year – a 75kg loggerhead turtle.



Last year, DTRP has released 42 rehabilitated turtles back into the waters off the coast of Dubai bringing the total released to 110 with many more due to be released later in the coming year when the waters warm up.

# FREEDIVING COURSE

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# FREEDIVING – WHO IS YOUR INSTRUCTOR?

FEATURE SARA-LISE HAITH

Freediving is the big diving news at the moment, it is a steadily increasing trend and more and more divers are jumping on the breath-hold band wagon. Scuba instructors are looking for more alternative income streams, divers are looking for other thrills and snorkellers want to get deeper.

Here is a list of questions that you may want to ask before you sign up for the course:

## Which Training Agency should I use?

As Freediving becomes more popular in the region and freediving news is more prolific through the continued work of locally based instructors, it is apparent that more dive centres are offering "Freediving Courses". My advice to anyone wanting to take a course is to research their instructors and the courses that they are offering. In the world-wide freediving community there are some recognised freediving training agencies.

**AIDA** – Association Internationale pour le Developpement de l'Apnee – founded in 1992 by a board of world class champion freedivers.

**IANTD** – International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers (IANTD – founded by Tom Mount, courses written by Kirk Krack, Nancy Romanica and Dan Hodgins.

**PFI** – Performance Freediving – founded by Kirk Krack and Mandy-Rae (Cruickshank) Krack.

**APNEA ACADEMY** – founded by world reknowned champion freediver Umberto Pellizzari.

**PADI** – a number of PADI freediving specialities are available which are written by experienced freediving instructors and who course material has been approved by PADI for teaching. Ask your local PADI dive centre if there is a qualified instructor available.

All of the above training agencies have been safely training freedivers to a recreational and professional level for over a decade. AIDA is also a world-wide recognised freediving competition organiser and ratifies freediving world records through a series of experienced international judges.

## How do you know if my instructor is qualified and renewed to teach?

AIDA publishes an up to date list of all their instructors on their website and students can look up the instructor working closest to them. Apnea Academy also have a list of instructors available at this link and Performance Freediving is run by their cofounders Mandy-Rae and Kirk Krack. If you are unsure about the course offered to you, do consult the training agency website and check whether your instructor is qualified to teach. For IANTD freediving

courses it is best to contact IANTD to find out if there are any instructors in the area.

I would advise that anyone offering freediving courses in the region that are not from a recognised training agency should be avoided for the following reasons:

- **INSURANCE** – the instructor will not be covered by any diving insurance and so also will not be able to insure their students with DAN insurance or an acceptable equivalent. All AIDA courses taught through myself, (Sara-Lise) have DAN insurance included in the price of the course for the duration of the course.
- **SAFETY** – the instructor may have some experience in freediving, but will not necessarily have received the correct safety training techniques and will not be able to pass those very important techniques on to the student diver. The student diver is therefore at risk, whatever the depth.
- **CREDIBILITY** – an instructor who teaches a freediving course with materials obtained from an unauthorised or unrecognised source, will possibly not have the correct training and safety standards, nor the authority to teach that material, and this affects the credibility of other instructors/training agencies who are teaching and enforcing proper teaching standards.

What you might want to ask yourself is, would you rather take freediving lessons from an official agency or a friend down the road who has dabbled in some freediving? Is your life worth paying the full price of a professionally trained instructor who can teach you to hold your breath safely, or is your life cheap enough to take risks and learn with someone who says "we will only go to 10 metres"?

Breath-hold diving, apnea, freediving, advanced snorkelling, however you would like to describe it, can be dangerous if carried out alone, or with an untrained or inexperienced buddy. Even the most experienced freedivers never hold their breath alone in water, and train religiously with buddies.

Freediving instructors are trained to be able to rescue a freediver from at least 25 metres of water, without the use of a scuba tank. They are also trained to teach people to reach safe depths gradually, and to use the correct breathing techniques used for efficient freediving. Freediving training takes time, for example the 2 star AIDA course (designed for beginners) prescribes a minimum of 2½ days to teach a freediver to dive safely and effectively to a depth of 16-20 metres.

Do not use the quick route, sign up for a recognised freediving course with a valid and renewed instructor and receive in return a lifetime of safe and enjoyable freediving.

**Current instructors teaching in the UAE are:**  
**SARA-LISE HAITH** – AIDA Instructor (Dubai)  
www.divasindubai.com | diva@divasindubai.com  
Tel: +971 50 436 8696



Sara-Lise: I have been swimming since I was 2 years old and have always loved the sea. I started freediving in the Cayman Islands in 2002, and have done courses/training in Hawaii, Egypt and the UAE, and became an AIDA instructor in 2007. Freediving is a mental escape and gives me a feeling of exhilaration, achievement, and empowerment.

**ALEX BOULTING** – AIDA Instructor (Abu Dhabi)  
**ADEL ABU HALIQA** (Abu Dhabi)  
www.freedivinguae.com  
alex@freedivinguae.com or adel@freedivinguae.com



I have been fascinated with the underwater world all my life and although I had heard about Freediving I only tried it when I came to the UAE: now I'm hooked. It is one of the few sports where adrenaline is a no-no and you have to be in a complete state of mental and physical relaxation to perform. I am a certified AIDA Instructor.

**WASSIMAL ZEIN** – Apnea Academy Instructor  
www.hayaarisub.com | info@hayaarisub.com  
Tel: +971 2 665 8220

**AIDA International** – www.aidainternational.org  
**Apnea Academy** – www.apnea-academy.com



# WAKATOBI

## A TRUE EXAMPLE OF ECOTOURISM

FEATURE **IBRAHIM AL-ZU'BI** UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY **OMAR AL HURAIZ**

I always like to explore diving in new places, preferably remote and far away from human impact. Luckily, we still have such places. I'm sure you all know Sipadan – Malaysia, Galapagos – Ecuador, Djibouti and the whale shark diving there and other diving destinations that I have been lucky to visit with the EDA team.

But the diving adventure that we had last month made me think about the impact of divers on the marine environment and the local community living close to the dive sites.

Our diving adventures were in Wakatobi – Indonesia (2 hour flight from Bali to be specific).

Wakatobi is the place of micro things, if you enjoy micro marine life, then Wakatobi is your place. Trying to spot pygmy seahorses will be an excellent eye test for you. It is a place where you notice how healthy the corals are, there was almost no damage at all to the corals by humans or nature.

I will not talk about how beautiful the marine life is in Wakatobi or how friendly the staff are and the amazing adventure that we had trying flou night diving, because that was already checked and they scored really high. I want to share with you how diving businesses can lead environmental initiatives in their communities and act as an excellent example to what we now call – Ecotourism.

Onemobaa (long white sandy beach) is a sacred area of Tolondono, a small island in the Wakatobi archipelago off the south east coast to Sulawesi, Indonesia. Onemobaa is the address of Wakatobi Dive Resort, one shining example of true ecotourism.

Wakatobi has always been about something more than just a great diving experience. Their mission from day one was to establish a dive resort that gave divers a sense of well-being that they are helping contribute to an environmentally and culturally sound conservation program. So it's not an accident that they established the Wakatobi Collaborative Community-based Reef Management Program, which is now one of the world's largest privately-funded marine protected areas.

### **COMMITTED TO PROTECTION, EDUCATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY**

For many years, Wakatobi Dive Resort has been known to be one of the world's most proactive eco-tourism resorts and has won several awards for being the most conservation-minded tourism operator in the Asia-Pacific region. Wakatobi Dive Resort has worked together with Project AWARE to advise operators worldwide on how to contribute substantially towards the marine ecosystem. They have received numerous environmental awards in the past sixteen years of operation and continually strive to reach a higher standard each year.

While almost every traveler may have some negative environmental impact on the place he or she visits, it is most important to see the overall environmental impact balance. The question every eco-conscious diver has to ask himself is: "Is this operation improving the natural environment? Does the local community benefit directly and indirectly?" Most dive destinations are deteriorating over time for a number of reasons. Wakatobi Dive Resort has not only managed to stop destructive fishing methods and unregulated exploitation, but has actually improved the quality of the resort surroundings, seagrass beds and reefs.

Recognizing the need for sustainable marine resource protection within the Wakatobi region, the Collaborative Community-based Reef Management Program was developed by the founders of the Wakatobi Dive Resort in consultation with local leaders and village elders. The Collaborative Community-based Reef Management Program was designed to motivate the people living within the Wakatobi region to realize the intrinsic value of the reefs and to inspire the villages to take an active role in protecting the marine ecosystem. The program achieves this by providing an economic alternative to fishing and creates real incentives that help protect and manage the reefs. Cooperation between local fishermen and visiting divers is promoted by generating an income from tourism that is channeled directly back into the community.



Wakatobi Dive Resort is proud of its efforts to counter destructive trends, to contribute back to the local communities, to build a lasting cooperative conservation program. Here's a sample of how Wakatobi Dive Resort goes beyond others.

## WAKATOBI DIVE RESORT ACTIONS

- Implements strict rules to minimize divers impact, non-compliance leads to exclusion from diving without refund.
- Conducts reef monitoring and cleaning when needed, all dive guides are fully committed to contribute towards conservation.
- Gives complete dive briefings by top notch senior dive instructors (with at least 2,000 dives) to enhance pleasure, increase knowledge, protect the marine environment.
- Sponsors regular marine biology and ecology presentations in addition to discussing the resort conservation programs.
- Offers village tours to further cultural understanding.
- Cleans a 1km stretch of beach every day.
- Reduces, separates and recycles waste as much as possible.
- Treats waste water in biological ways (microbiological decomposition under ideal conditions at 28°C/leach fields/other treatments to avoid nutrients entering the sea).
- Uses local traditional skills to build and maintain the resort, sells local products.
- Provides full-time employment to a workforce of about 130 locals (with equivalent salaries for men and woman).

## BEYOND THE ORDINARY

The marine reserve is just one of many unique programs Wakatobi Dive Resort has established over the years. In addition, their operation goes way beyond most dive operators' scope by:

- Sponsoring electricity for the 500-person village on their resort island (including 2km power line to the village, transformers, electrical installations in every house, providing 24 hrs maintenance team) in exchange for the villagers honoring a 3km reef sanctuary on their traditional fishing grounds.
- Sponsoring waste management in the surrounding villages on the neighboring island.
- Sponsoring public moorings and harbor facilities to reduce anchor damage.
- Sponsoring public projects for all 17 villages in their subdistrict (Collaborative Community-based Reef Management Program).
- Sponsoring schools with education materials.
- Recognizing that the poorest need the most support to refrain from traditional but destructive practices such as reef





# FEATURES

gleaning. For this reason, they employ up to 50 widows to produce natural roof tiles (made by sago palm leaves) for the resort buildings and they sponsor scholarships for orphans.

- Sponsoring public sport events.
- Sponsoring public awareness meetings about conservation issues and employing staff to socialize conservation programs in all villages.
- Sponsoring a small credit scheme for small businesses to increase compliance.
- Sponsoring patrols in the vicinity performed by representatives of the local communities.

## MARANGGO – THE STORY OF AN AIRSTRIP

In 2001, for the first time ever, a dive resort operator, Wakatobi Dive Resort, privately financed and constructed an airstrip to provide access to a previously undeveloped part of South East Sulawesi.

The concept of the project was to facilitate the development of responsible ecotourism that generates international awareness of the unique marine resources in the area as well as employment and education for the local community.

Without this eco-tourism project, the locals are largely dependant on working with foreign, illegal fishing boats to make a living.

The resort on the contrary brings employment, educational material, environmental awareness and international aid. The only way for the resort to stay alive and thriving was by keeping a sustainable number of guests per year. The airstrip was a necessary stepping stone, supported by the locals.

If they were commended for their conservation efforts, why then build an airstrip? 85% of the world's coral reefs have already been damaged or are under severe stress. This destruction is caused mainly by human activities, especially by destructive and non-sustainable fishing methods, such as cyanide and dynamite fishing.

In the area around Wakatobi, this kind of fishing still occurs (however limited by their patrols) by boats from other areas of Indonesia or other countries. These boats are owned and crewed by people who don't consider the pressure they are putting on the marine-life. The owners don't pay local taxes, the crew doesn't care where they throw anchor or deplete marine resources. In the end, locals get very little gain from this kind of activity.

There is no way that anyone with an eco-conscious can now march in and simply tell the locals to not walk on the reefs and stop supporting the foreign fishermen, as this makes up for part of their living. Instead, what is needed is an alternative source of income whereby people can choose whether they wish to preserve or destroy.





# FEATURES

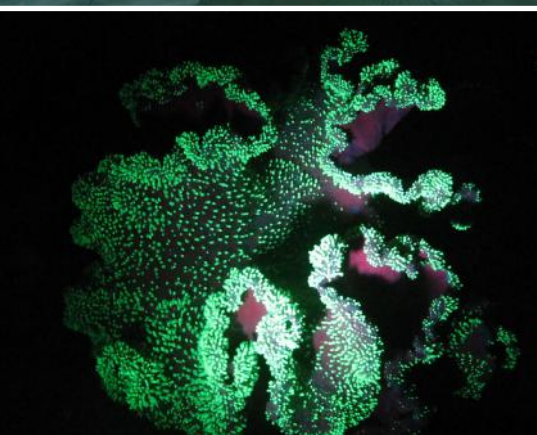
Wakatobi Dive Resort believes that the best and most sustainable alternative is to create employment and education opportunities through responsible, conservation-linked tourism.

Although it is clear that this kind of tourism needs to be small-scale, it proved to not be feasible in such a remote location without proper infrastructure.

This is the reason the small airstrip, Marranggo, was built. Guests can now travel a lot safer by air than boat and enough funds (brought in by tourism) can be used to finance schools, the Collaborative Community-based Reef Management Program and the numerous other actions taken by Wakatobi Dive Resort to ensure the continued health of this region.

Finally, Wakatobi must be on the Bucket list of every diver; you will enjoy the dives and be an Eco and Ethical Diver.

For more details, you can check the Wakatobi website [www.wakatobi.com](http://www.wakatobi.com) or contact EDA's travel agent – Discover Orient Holidays to book your trip there.





# MORE TO MALÉ

FEATURE SARA-LISE HAITH – WWW.DIVASINDUBAI.COM



If you ever have to stop over in Malé after a holiday in the Maldives, or feel like a bit of culture after soaking up the sun for a week on a resort island, there is more to Malé than meets the eye. With an area of just over 1.77 square km, it is home to over seventy thousand people, and the busiest and the most populous island in the archipelago. In the past, it has been known as the Sultan's island.

The traditional tourist visit on a Malé day trip normally includes a visit to the Mosque, the fish market, and the souvenir shops. If you have some time on your hands, or a couple of days free even, then I would suggest that you dive locally and do some local island exploring.

After 10 days in Lhaviyani Atoll on honeymoon, we decided to spend two nights in Malé, and do something different. We used Sea Explorers to go diving. (<http://www.seamaldives.com.mv/>) We crossed over to Malé from the Airport (have 10 Rufiyaa each or a 1 USD note ready for the fare), dumped our luggage in the hotel and went to check in the dive shop.

We dived from a local dhoni, with nothing of the habitual Maldivian resort diving dhoni luxuries, but we had loads of space, just four divers, a sturdy dhoni, great snacks with a smile, and also a very knowledgeable dive guide, Abdulla. We cruised for a few minutes from Malé towards the MV Victory wreck. It lies just off the airport reef in 36 metres of water. It ran aground in

1981, and sits upright on the bottom. There are two masts, one with a permanent descent line and the mast top sits around 16 metres. As the wreck sits in the channel between the city island of Malé and the airport, currents can rush through here at fierce speeds on occasion which is really exciting, you have to hang on! When the currents are medium to low, it is an excellent wreck dive to do for a speciality dive, whether deep dive training or wreck dive training. The visibility is more often 15 metres or more, and the wreck is full of life. You have to be very careful of nudibranchs and watch where you put your hands as there are scorpion and leaf fish.

The entry to the wreck is a giant stride and head straight for the descent line as often there is a surface current. A diver should follow the line to the mast and then descend down the coral encrusted mast to the deck, and commence on the starboard side of the wreck towards the stern, back down the port side towards the wheelhouse (don't forget to check out the wheelhouse inside as it is teeming with life), then an exploration of the bow, up to the top of the wheelhouse where in general you will be reaching the limits of your no-decompression limit. It is suggested that divers commence their ascent with no less than 70 bar from the fly bridge, especially when the current is strong as a diver will need to ascend using the ascent/descent line. The wreck is 110 metres long, and you will have to plan your air accordingly. The deck is 25 metres

deep, and you can then sink slowly into the hull area where the remains of the original cargo lie still. Champagne bottles, photo albums, bags of cement, are still quite visible but do be careful of any jagged pieces of metal that stick out from the wreck.

After this dive, take a surface interval and sail up to the reefs up to Paradise Island which will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour. This is a very popular reef called Manta Point or locally as Lankanfinolhu. During the south west monsoon (October to April) mantas frequent the cleaning stations here. You will need to stay at a maximum of 15 metres to allow yourself enough bottom time to enjoy the complete dive. The current is best when it is "outgoing", to see the mantas and the general rule is to stay well back from the cleaning station and respect their space. There is a huge Napoleon wrasse on this reef as well that is very curious and comes quite close to divers. There are some excellent overhangs to explore after watching the mantas and a great drift dive with turtles, rays, and if you have a good eye there are also some stone fish hanging around.

So now you have to decompress before you fly. You have seen the fish market, visited the Friday mosque (Hujuru Miskiyy) which was built in 1656, and bought a hand painted t-shirt and exhausted yourself in the dive retail shops. What now? Take a ferry to Vilingili Island. It is an ex-resort island which was adopted as the fifth district of Malé, and inhabited in





and the west, try some of these. (Walking is best).

**The Seagull Cafe** – refurbished and extended after the Tsunami. On the corner of Chandhanee Magu and Fareedheemagu Magu (close to the dive retail shops and opposite Dhiraaghu). They have a wide menu selection of hot and cold meals, and the best ice cream in town.

**Olive Restaurant** – opposite Seagull and they serve Italian and local food.

**Sea House** – close to the airport jetty and has outdoor dining. Located on Boduthakurufaanu Magu.

**Trends Cafe** – at the Nasandura hotel. A garden tea house or "Sai Hota" (serving with hot meals and 'short-eats'; which is a variety of (often deep-fried) sweet and savoury finger-food, mostly fish and coconut based, as well as local bread 'roshi' to be eaten with a variety of side dishes.

And for a good coffee to go before you hit the airport, get a takeout coffee (or sit down for ten minutes) at Shell Beans, which is a coffee shop on the corner; just past HSBC at the airport jetty. They make Costa style coffee and muffins with a couple of good local style sandwiches as well.



See the chart below for places to stay in Malé.

the late 1990s in order to ease burden of the immense population of Malé. Now fully inhabited, with reasonable infrastructure. Most Villingili residents commute to Male for work/school, preferring to educate their children in the more established schools of Malé. An amusing sight is the motorbike park and ride station at the jetty, as it would seem that there are more motorbikes in Malé than actual residents. Transfer from Villingili to Malé is via government subsidized ferries, that run every half an hour, and costs about 3 Rufiyaa.

As Vilingili is a local island, visitors will need to respect local dress and wear modest clothing. Women will have to wear a short and t-shirt for swimming. There are some great local restaurants and beautiful snorkelling reefs. There is a water sports centre on the island if you fancy doing some windsurfing and some great photography spots if you want to capture some local Maldivian living. Do take some mosquito spray with you if you are visiting in the June/July months! If you can, chat to the locals. We met some guys who were taking their turtles for a swim. As dogs are not allowed in Maldives, it seems like a logical alternative. They capture turtles as youngsters, raise them at home and take them for daily swims, and release them into the wild when they are older. Their reasoning behind this was to avoid them being eaten by predators too early.

Back on Malé island, we passed by the Grand Friday Mosque, Masjid-al Sultan Mohamed Thakurufaanu-al-A'z'am is the biggest mosque in the Maldives. This grand mosque with its dominant golden dome decorates the facade of Malé. It can accommodate over five thousand worshippers at a time. The old Friday mosque with its unique minaret and the tombs of national heroes and members of royalty resting in the quietness of its compound, gives the visitor a glimpse of the past. The art in the mosque and royal blue grounds are unique and invaluable. Other important sites in Malé include the tombs of legendary saints, Mulee-aage – the previous Presidential Palace, the Presidential Palace built recently, and the national museum in the Sultan Park which shows the glories of a different era. All these are within a ten minute stroll.

Since the new Maldivian government has formed, it is remarkable how much change and progress has happened. New restaurants and buildings are sprouting up all over town. Restaurants open from early morning till 1 am in the night, and menus ranging from Thai, Italian, Indian and other international, regional and local cuisine. There are cool air-conditioned bistros to the laid-back open-air cafes. For a truly Maldivian dining experience, try the local grilled fish or the flaked tuna with coconut (Mas salad). For a fusion of local taste

HOTEL NAME	CONTACT (Country code +960)	COMMENTS	CAPACITY
Nasandhura Palace Hotel Malé	T: 333-8844 F: 332-0822	Ministry of Tourism, Malé <a href="mailto:nasandhura@dhivehinet.net.mv">nasandhura@dhivehinet.net.mv</a> Expensive and a bit of luxury if required.	62
Villingili View Inn Malé	T: 331-8696 F: 332-5213	M, 155, Majeedhee Magu, K. Malé Close to the South Jetty and facing Vilingili Island. Comfortable and clean, and has a sea view restaurant with good local and international food.	14 rooms
Kam Hotel Malé	T: 332-0611 F: 332-0614	Kam Company Pvt Ltd H. Maagala, Meheli Goalhi <a href="mailto:resevation@kam.com">resevation@kam.com</a> Close to the airport jetty and no taxi required. Clean, with reasonable comfort and the breakfast is a buffet and above average.	12 rooms 24 Beds
Hotel Relax Inn Malé	T: 331-4531 F: 331-453	Mr. Solih Hussain, H. Olive, Ameeru Ahmed Magu, Malé <a href="mailto:hotelrelaxinn@relaxmaldives.com">hotelrelaxinn@relaxmaldives.com</a> Next door to Kam Hotel and recently refurbished.	60
Hulhule Island Hotel Hulhule	T: 333-0888 F: 333-0777	Maldives Inflight Catering Services Pvt. Ltd. <a href="mailto:sales@hih.com.mv">sales@hih.com.mv</a> The only licensed in Malé. Expensive.	176
Mookai Hotel Malé	T: 333-8811 F: 333-8822	Mookai Hotel and Service Flats Pvt. Ltd., H. Kandige, Dheefram Goalhi, Malé <a href="mailto:mookai@dhivehinet.net.mv">mookai@dhivehinet.net.mv</a> Close to Kam Hotel, reasonably priced and clean.	102

# OCTOPUS ROCK

ARTICLE STEPHANIE DAVIES, SCUBA DUBAI



Octopus Rock is located in the Musandam, Oman. It is an excellent site for its varied array of marine organisms. It's perfect for snorkelling, night diving and most levels of qualification and experience. As this site is situated in Lima Bay, it is quite sheltered from the elements, but care should still be taken as tides change and there can be a surprising current that may pull you a little off the rock. Always carry a delayed surface marker buoy and reel, and make sure your boat handler is aware of which way the current is travelling. Coordinates are N26°00'01.2" E56°26'2.04" and like all the sites here in the Musandam, you will need a GPS. The local fishermen, who traverse these seas daily, however, seem to be able to drive to these places with their eyes closed!

There are a few companies that run from Dibba, which is the nearest port to leave from. To get there from Dubai or Abu Dhabi you will need to cross the Oman border; so passports with visas will be needed, although you will not need an Omani Visa, just have a valid tourist or residency visa from Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

Octopus Rock is also known as "The Stack" and it sits north of Lima, 3m from land. The circular rock falls down to about 23m onto a sandy/rocky bed, although further out to the south-east it drops down to around 45m. The north-west runs in ridges and along here there is an abundance of soft corals, starting with bouquets of green and white

whip coral. As you make your way around the rock the whip coral is almost entirely replaced with a soft blue coral, and orange and purple teddy bear coral. If you take a camera with you remember to set the white balance so you can really capture the spectrum of colours seen here. You will also see fanworms and featherstars, and although they look like some kind of underwater plant, they are actually part of the Animalia Kingdom.

Featherstars have feather like arms that produce sticky mucus in order to trap small particles of food from the sea water; moving the mucus covered particles down the arms to the mouth which is located at the base. You will generally see these creatures fully extended at night, whilst during the day they tend to curl up as a form of defence.

The fanworm is a filter feeder; coming out of its sand or mud, tube like home to feed on free flowing particles. If threatened or when not covered by water during low tides, the worm retracts into its tube for protection.

This reef attracts large groups of shoaling fish, yellow snappers, blue striped snappers, fusiliers, large bat fish and red tooth trigger fish. Morays, lobsters and crayfish inhabit the crevices and holes in the rocks, while lone cornet fish swim quietly by. Innocent looking lion fish tend to hang out near the rocks, but don't be fooled, as these harmless looking creatures actually have highly poisonous spines which could spoil your day if touched. Scorpion fish are another highly toxic species which are cleverly camouflaged against their rocky surroundings, so do be careful where you are placing your hand or you may just find yourself putting it straight on top of one. This is when good buoyancy comes into practice, especially when trying to steady yourself to take that award winning photograph!

Further out, you will probably see some of the larger pelagic species such as trevally, tuna, barracuda, jacks and if you are lucky enough you might just see the odd reef shark.

Large cow tailed and marbled sting rays can often be seen on the sandy seabed to the north west of the rock. These magnificent creatures glide through the water with the elegance of a ballerina, but do watch out for the venomous barb found on their tail, although not known to be aggressive they will shoot their tail up in a defensive act if they feel threatened or cornered.

When diving in the Musandam you can get away with wearing a 5-7m wet suit from December to March or April. After April you may only need a 3m long wet suit, although thermal clines at depth can make it a little nippy at times. By May/June temperatures rise to a balmy 25+ degrees. July and August sees it rise even further to around 30 degrees but skins or 1m wetsuits are still advisable for protection from the sun as well as any stingers that may be present.

Visibility on a good day can be up to 15m, while during high concentrations of plankton or bad weather the visibility can drop to 3-4m, although this doesn't mean you will see less, you just have to look a little closer!

On the last dive I did here the visibility was down to 3-4m, however, it was on this day that my buddy and I saw most of the marine life mentioned above plus squid, cute blue and green spotted box fish, a shiny conch shell and a long tailed nudibranch, measuring about 5 inches long, making this dive a super end to three brilliant dives in just one day. You just cannot beat the serenity and tranquillity of the Musandam if you want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city!





# DIVE AQABA

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **GORDON T. SMITH**

It was day three of my four day dive trip to Aqaba, Jordan, and after two days of southerly winds I was at last on the boat on my way to dive Cedar Pride, a wreck in the Gulf of Aqaba, sunk deliberately as a dive site on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1985.

Boat diving in Aqaba is controlled by the Jordanian Navy, and due to weather conditions, they had banned all boats from going out as the southerly winds usually bring rough water, and they were right. Generally there are only a few days per year when the wind blows from the south, and I had to pick two of them as part of my dive itinerary, Murphy's Law!

Also accompanying me on this trip should have been two of my friends from Austria, Christian and Veronika, however they both had colds and had called off the trip, so I was on my own (again), but due to low season, the boat was all mine and choice of dive site mine too.

The dive staff at Dive Aqaba told me that the viz would not be good after the recent storms, something that I would easily concur from my past experiences, so the camera was duly fitted with a macro lens. On entering the water however I was immediately taken aback by how good it was, easily 15-20M, however my buddy Huw (one of the dive instructors) complained that it was bad. Wow, if 15-20M is bad here they better not dive over in the UAE. I was going to need to switch over to my 10.5mm lens for the next dive.

The Cedar Pride is a great dive, and I could not wait to return armed with my wide angle lens, however there are plenty of macro subjects on it so no issues with photography.

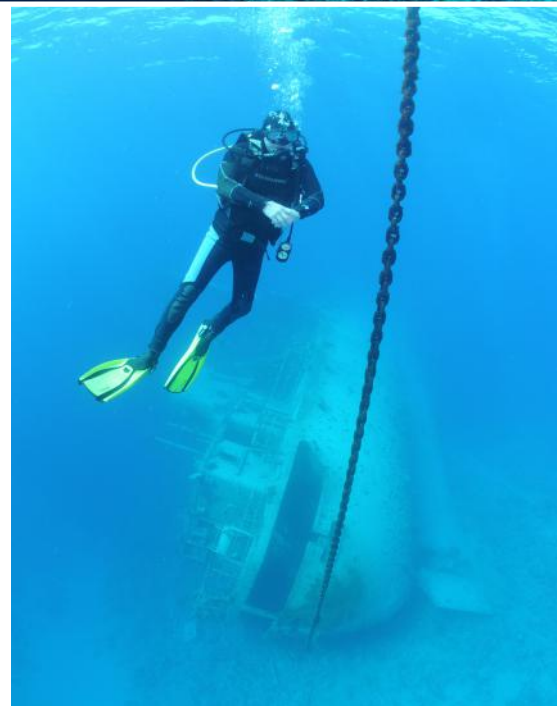
My second dive was also another choice of mine, the Tank. Actually it is an old M42 Duster tracked anti-aircraft gun.

After a mosey around the Seven Sisters we ascended to around 6m and a stunning subject for wide angle, plus also macro as there were several nudibranchs crawling around it too (*C. quadricolour*).

After this dive the boat turned around and started to head back to the Royal Yacht Club where she is moored, we had something to eat then the third and final dive of the day at First Bay North. My buddy was now Omar as Huw was cold (water temperature was 22°C, and I had my trusty Mares 5mm semi-dry, mafi mushkela).

I had now changed to my 85mm Macro lens, the viz was so good to use this one. This is a great site for small fish, Omar was desperately looking for a frogfish to show me but perhaps the southerly winds had made it change location. We did come across an electric ray (*Torpedo* sp.) and there were hundreds of anemones around most of which had juvenile fish living in them (*A. bicinctus*). There were many other fish to photograph too, I was having fun.

Back at the dive shop we had several refreshments to celebrate my 1,000<sup>th</sup> dive, and retired early.





# DIVING DESTINATIONS

My second and final day of diving was a return to the Cedar Pride, however there were other divers today as it was Friday, so the captain decided that the first stop should be at the Power Station, which is a wall dive and deeper than the wreck. Once again my camera was set up wrong, but no time to change from wide angle to macro. Photographically a disappointing dive, however I had a minor disaster prior to getting into the water.

On suiting up Huw was busy so I asked another one of the divers to zip me up, which on retrospect was a big mistake as he promptly broke the inner zip of my semi dry rendering it into a wetsuit, I was not too happy!

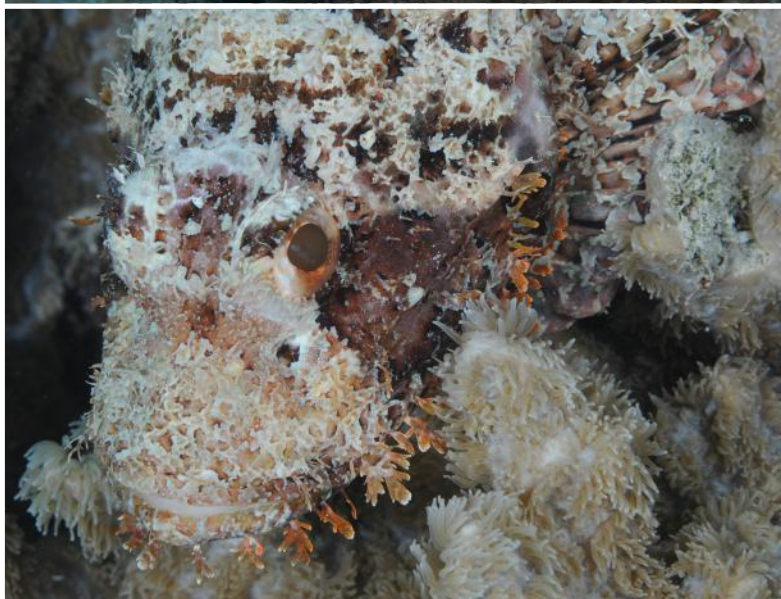
My plan for three dives was aborted after the second dive on the Cedar Pride as I was getting cold now.

So out of a planned twelve dives I made five, not great odds, but weather is not under my control. However that being said, this is an area I will return to at some point soon. Aqaba is a mere three hour flight from the UAE, and only a three hour drive from Amman (less distance than from Dubai to Muscat), so logistically nothing difficult.

There are many dive sites and plenty of subjects to photograph in the Gulf of Aqaba despite the short shoreline, and shore diving is also available.

Flying to Amman is not so difficult either with Emirates, Etihad, Arabian Airlines and Royal Jordanian all flying from the UAE to Jordan. There is also a flight from Amman to Aqaba for those not wishing to go by road. As we were originally three people on this trip I had hired a car to do the journey, the drive was fairly simple.

I would also like to thank all of the staff from Dive Aqaba for their company during my stay there, especially when we could not dive.









# G'DIVE MATE!!!

SUNSHINE. VARIED REEF TERRAIN. TROPICAL RAINFOREST. NORTHERN AUSTRALIA OFFERS A DELECTABLE TASTE OF DOWN UNDER

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **MARC ANTHONY VILORIA**



Submerged in clear waters of the Coral Sea, you can look as far as your eyes can see and soak up the scene: unlimited reef terrain covered with hundreds of different corals and what is waiting down there is a vast marine life of unparalleled population. Your imagination will just blows you away...

Less than a two hour boat trip from Cairns, one of the highly visited places in Australia, is the Great Barrier Reef that attracts tourists close to 2 million each year. The Great Barrier Reef surely remains to be one of the most mesmerizing wonders of the world! Located off the coast of Queensland in the Northeastern area of Australia, this beautiful structure mainly constitutes of tiny living organisms. The Great Barrier Reef is home to a variety of interesting species and one would be amazed with the kind of world that exists beneath the sea. Well, there are definitely many reasons why the Great Barrier Reef pulls large crowds. (The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching for over 2,600 kilometers (1,600 mi) over an area of approximately 344,400 square kilometers (133,000 sq mi).

### TIME TO DIVE

It won't take long for you to eagerly gear up and jump into the water to get your first Great Barrier Reef experience. My wife (Mylyn) and I had been wanting to do this dive trip for a long time and now the opportunity finally came. Reef Magic Cruises is one of the few operators who can accommodate families with small children but yet enjoy the full-board activities available with the cruise. Their catamaran can load up to 200 passengers and docks in an all-weather Marine World platform that caters for all activity levels. We had to take turns on our dives as one of us had to look after the

little rascals (Hugo and Klein) while they play and snorkel around the reef.

**DAY 1** | The dives were at two different locations at Moore Reef. The first one was at the "Pressure Point", a 23 meter depth dive site with hundreds of staggered coral pinnacles that offer different perspectives of the vast coral formations. I got the privilege to join in on a ceremony of spreading the ashes of the remains of one of the dive guide's friends who passed away. The ashes were released at 16 meters where the resident yellow-tailed barracudas can be seen. The second dive site was "The Lagoon" which is a short swim away from the Marine World platform. At 15 meters, we had the closest encounter with "Wally" a resident Maori wrasse that is about a meter and a half long. Moore Reef in general has large reef coral formations that are rich in marine life. Wrasse, parrotfish, emperors, butterfly fish and surgeonfish are common finds in this area. Damselfish hide in the soft corals and dash out to catch planktonic food. There is an abundance of hard coral in good condition and well interspersed. Most of the operators work their dives mainly on the back reefs.

**DAY 2** | Diving was done with Deep Sea Divers Den, another operator that only offers diving and snorkeling activities. I did this dive trip alone as my family decided to chill out on dry land. I did 3 dives at the Norman Reef after a two hour boat trip from Cairns. The "West Side" and "Wild Side" were the first 2 dive sites I dove in. These 2 dive sites at 30 meters are adjacent to each other that literally form a V-shape. Both sites offer a different diving experience consisting of large drop offs, swim-throughs, rock formation tunnels and coral covered walls. The third dive site "Sandra's Drop Off" is located on the northern part of Norman Reef. A more relaxing dive site as the water is almost at stand still. With plenty of large coral heads before it slopes down to the sandy bottom of 20 meters, a wide angle photography enthusiast will enjoy taking back memories of this reef. Most common finds are Maori wrasse, moray eels, giant clams, anemones and different varieties of clownfish. Batfish, spangled emperors, fusiliers, red bass and barramundi cod join in from time to time. Along the reef are large bommies, staghorn thickets and hillocks of rich coral cover.

Scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef is the pinnacle for numerous scuba divers, often a humbling experience which defies the

realms of regular reef diving, due to the fact that the Great Barrier Reef is made up of so many individual reefs. The marine life which surrounds the Great Barrier Reef is astounding and is just another reason why this premium scuba diving location attracts so many divers.

### OUT FROM THE WATER

For further repose, we took a tropical rainforest experience in Kuranda and a walk-around the city of Cairns.

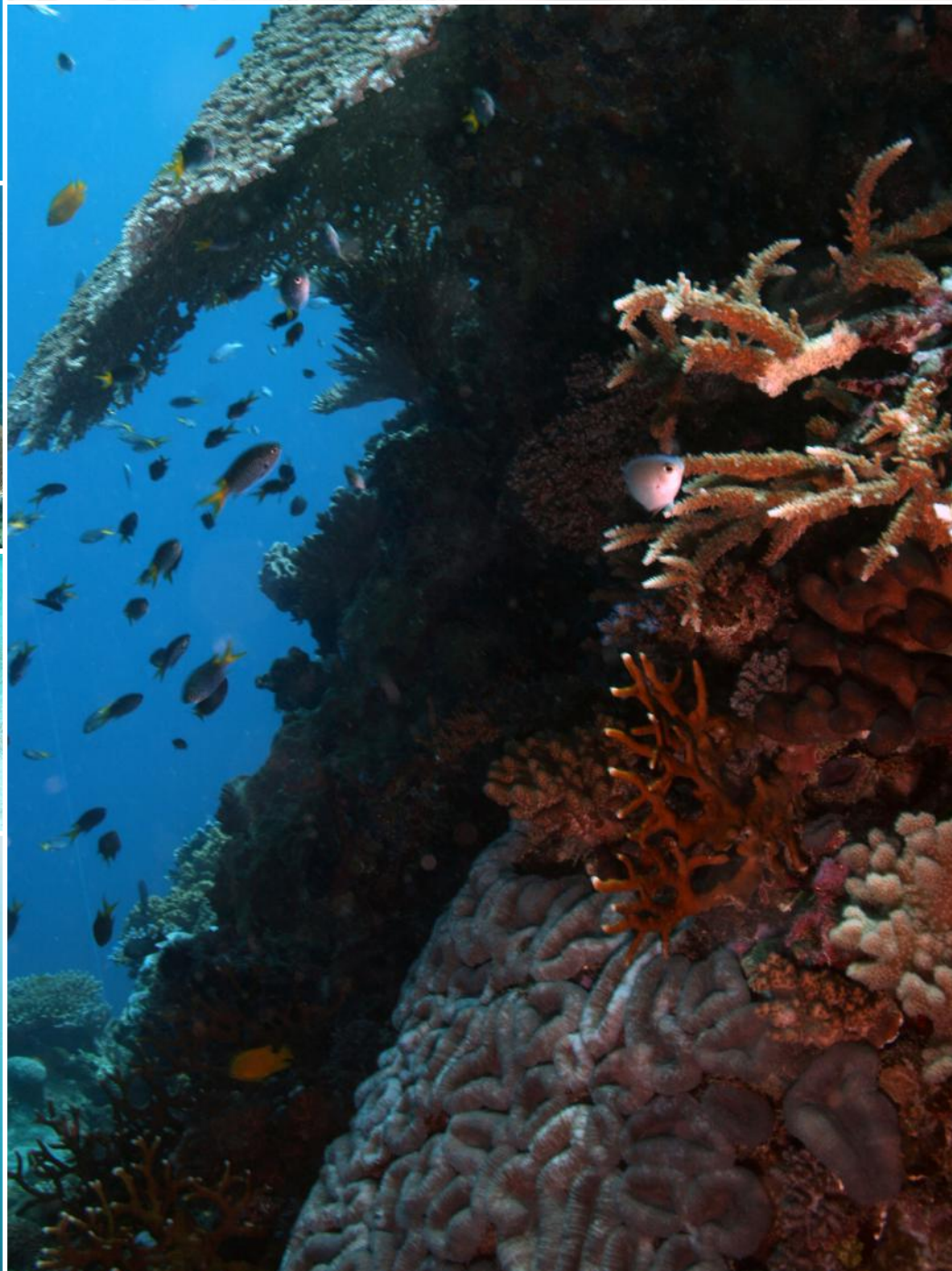
The picturesque mountain retreat of Kuranda Village just 25km northwest of Cairns is surrounded by a World Heritage Rainforest. We took the time to visit some of Kuranda's many first class nature based tourist attractions, which include koalas, butterflies, native and exotic birds, kangaroo wallabies and reptiles. Traditional Aboriginal dancers performed interpretations of some of their ceremonies that are a common part of their daily activities. We join an Army Duck ride through the thick rainforest of Kuranda. On the way back to the city, we rode the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway as not to miss the famous Barron Falls, which is a breathtaking scenic view.

Cairns city is a worry and traffic-free city with a laid back atmosphere of an Aussie lifestyle. Since the city attracts tourists almost the whole year round, most of the streets are lined with shops, cafés and restaurants. There is something here for everyone to enjoy... adrenaline-charged adventures apart from scuba diving are white water rafting, sky diving and bungee jumping or more gentle pursuits like bird watching, hiking or just sitting under a palm tree sipping a cocktail.

It has been a wonderful experience for us in this northern part of Australia having to experience both the wonderful Great Barrier Reef and the calm and relaxing atmosphere of Cairns.









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# TRAUMA FROM MARINE ANIMALS

FEATURE **BARBARA KARIN VELA, MD**



Photo by Danny Bergeron

Although marine life injuries bear relatively small proportion of interventions in diving medicine and in accident & emergency departments, there is still a significant number of injuries caused mostly without intention and due to negligence or lack of knowledge. Most underwater creatures restrict aggression only for self-defense and act only when they feel threatened. Depending on their natural characteristics their actions may cause bites, cuts, punctures, electrical shocks, lacerations and envenomations. In this article we are going to deal with physical injuries (wounds) without presence of venom. Many marine animals avoid humans, but they can change this attitude by being familiar with them, especially divers, who usually do not confront the animals aggressively. With the closer contact between divers and animals, there is increased possibility of injuries to both species. Some divers feed animals underwater, which results in aggression and can impose injury to the diver. As an example of the last statement, there was a video posted on the Internet a few years ago where a diver was feeding a giant eel with sausages. The eel, having mistaken a thumb for a sausage bit it off completely.

Of course, the majority of the possible problems can be solved by being responsible during diving and by taking measures of precautions when in encounter with underwater animals, especially in the cases when the divers are not familiar with the animals' standard pattern of behavior. However, some cases were recorded where these measures were not sufficient due to different circumstances.

What can you do if this happens to you? In most cases with severe wounds there is a direct threat of drowning depending on the severity of the attack. So, the first action must include measures against drowning and suppression of panic, and the victim should be released from the attacking animal if that is still the case. If the victim is unconscious, the basics of first aid (ABC: airway, breathing, circulation) should be your primary concern, and only by following these rules injuries should be assessed. Minor cuts and punctures usually stop bleeding on their own, but in case of more severe injury blood loss could be significant. In case of continuous bleeding, gentle pressure should be applied on the wound with a clean cloth or bandage. The pressure should continue for

20 to 30 minutes, as it takes some time for the body to form a blood clot that closes the wound. It is unnecessary to keep checking if the bleeding has stopped because this can dislodge the clot that is forming and cause the bleeding to resume. When the bleeding has stopped, the wound can be rinsed with clear water. The surrounding area of the wound can be cleaned with soap and a washcloth, but in case that soap enters the wound it could irritate it. If there is dirt or debris, it can be taken out with tweezers, but if you see any big pieces of foreign material in the wound, like the remains of animal teeth, leave the work to the trained medical personnel to take care of. Even though thorough cleaning reduces the risk of infection and tetanus, wounds caused by marine animals have tendencies to infect and a victim is recommended to take some broad spectrum antibiotic. After the wound has been cleaned, a thin layer of antibiotic cream should be applied to keep the surface moist and to discourage infection. The wound should be covered by a bandage. Any wound deeper than 6 millimeters or gaping or having jagged edges and having fat or muscle protruding usually requires stitches. The sooner the

stitches are applied, the less the chances of getting infection. As already mentioned, marine animal injuries can easily get infected, so the wound should be monitored for the signs of infection which can be prolonged healing, redness, increasing pain, drainage, warmth or swelling. If the wound is deeper or dirty, and the victim didn't have a tetanus shot for more than five years, it is recommended to get one. A tetanus shot is recommended every 10 years to keep up to date.

There are many animals, which can act aggressively, but there are few that are known for their aggression. Sharks are most feared of since the injuries from their attack can be fatal and debilitating. Although sharks' behavior is the most studied one, in reality, shark attacks are very rare; they are more frequent when there are more people at risk, like at weekends and on holidays. Those attacks usually happen at sharks' natural feeding time, near deep channels, in turbid waters in estuaries, or in the places where animal products are dumped. Most shark attacks are represented by different degrees of a feeding attack, like circling around the victim and producing injury by bumping into it, biting it, or, if more sharks are around, they may commence a feeding frenzy where the original prey, a predator or any other moving object can be attacked. The Great White has a strategy, "bite and spit". The shark makes a sudden dash, takes one bite and releases the prey, which then bleeds to death. Once the prey has stopped moving, the shark can continue its meal. Some shark attacks are triggered by territorial protection, where a shark adopts a defensive and snapping position, and if the intruder leaves the area, the confrontation is usually avoided and the attack prevented. In case of a shark attack, the most valuable first aid consists in protecting the victim from further attacks and in stopping the bleeding. The victim should be removed from the shark (the rescuer is rarely injured as sharks tend to concentrate on the original victim) and prevented from drowning. At the same time further blood loss should be prevented by any means available, by pressure on the bleeding site, using tourniquets or pressure bandages, by tying off blood vessels, etc. Any material available should be used. The mortality rate is so high that there should be no apprehension regarding either the use of tourniquets or contamination of wounds. The victim should be lying down with legs elevated, covered lightly with clothing and while being transferred to hospital, medical treatment should be started.

In shark infested waters, divers should take some precautions not to urinate in the water; not to dive with bleeding wounds, movement should be gentle, with no thrashing of water on the surface, and to dive with a buddy or a group. Shark attacks are more likely with increased depth, and can be provoked by feeding, playing with or killing sharks. Wet suits do not offer any protection, and in case



Shark Feeding. Photo by Gerick Bergsma.

of diving in the shark waters, the use of shark deterrents may be appropriate under certain conditions to push the animal away. Divers should not catch fish and hold it near their body, as this may attract sharks. In case a shark attack is encountered, it is best to descend to the seabed or to the protection of the rocks, a cliff face, or some other obstacle to interfere with the feeding pattern. If the diver recognizes territorial defending patterns, he should vacate the area slowly swimming backwards and moving the SCUBA tank on the chest.

There are some other fish species, whose bites can cause trauma to a diver, but such cases are sporadic and rarely fatal. The species attacking occasionally is the barracuda, which is sometimes attracted by bright coloured objects or lights during a night dive; a grouper can also act aggressively if speared; eels attack when provoked, either by intrusion in their domain or after they have been injured or caught on lines or spear guns. Eels, once they attack, are likely to be difficult to dislodge and can even resume attack after being dislodged. The wound tends to be extensively lacerated and infected, and should be managed surgically.

One more type of trauma caused by marine animals can be the charging of electrical activity. The best known fish for doing that is the electric ray, a slow swimmer which is commonly found on sandy bottoms in the inshore waters. Electric rays can produce automatic discharges between 8 and 220 volts when it is touched or, sometimes when it is approached. Following the electrical discharge, there is a short period before the ray regains its electrical potential. There are no fatalities recorded from this type of traumatic injury, but the electrical discharge can be disabling.

Octopus and squids have long been a source of a lot of folklore with a great deal of fantasy in some of the descriptions of their attacks. An octopus has all means to inflict injury to humans in terms of bites and puncture

wounds from the mouth, whereas giant squids can cause puncture wounds by modified claws on the tips of their tentacles. The majority of these animals avoid human contact as much as possible, but there have been some known cases of attacks on humans, usually following an intrusion into the animal's territory with a spear gun.

Swordfish and sawfish, and other fish species equipped with a saw or sword as an extension of the jaw have caused many injuries to the fishermen and occasionally to the divers. These species can cause traumatic injury by the penetration of their elongated jaws into the body cavities thus causing injuries to the face and head. Smaller members of this species, like needlefish, are known to attack divers on night dives as fish tend to be attracted by light. Injuries from this species can be severe, and can cause death from bleeding. These puncture wounds are deep and narrow, and bacteria can be pushed deep into the tissue, which makes them easier to infect and difficult to clean.

In general, for any wound which comes from marine animals, the simple procedure described above should be used, with the exception of extensive wounds with heavy bleeding, where, after providing the ABC's of first aid, or doing it simultaneously, the bleeding should be controlled by all possible means. Depending on the severity of the injury, diving can be continued (small cuts which are not bleeding profusely), but in the case of more severe injury, dives should be aborted, and to save the victim, make a direct ascent to the surface.

In the next article, wounds caused by venomous marine animals, their effects on the whole body and first aid will be described.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## DMEX 2011 (DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION)

1-5 March held at Dubai International Boat Show, Mina Seyahi

## EDA MARKET DAY

18-19 February, JBR Square by Il Caffe Di Roma (10:00 - 18:00)

## EARTH HOUR

26<sup>th</sup> March

## EDA MOVIE NIGHT

12<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm, MOE Cinestar

## DIGITAL ONLINE REGISTRATION DEADLINE

30<sup>th</sup> April, midnight

# MARINE CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INTERESTING LINKS AND RESOURCES

- <http://www.conbio.org/>



- <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/>



- <http://www.mcbi.org/>



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### MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve, protect and restore the UAE 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.

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# THE EDA MARKET DAY



FRIDAY & SATURDAY, 18TH - 19TH MARCH 2011 @ JBR BY IL CAFFE DI ROMA  
10AM - 6PM



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# EDA

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EDA is a non-profit voluntary federal organization and is accredited by UNEP as an International Environmental Organization.