



EDA

جمعية الإمارات للغوص
Emirates Diving Association

EDITION 3 Vol. I
DECEMBER 2004

DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

UPCOMING EVENTS



DIVING ON THE EAST COAST

EDA'S SEYCHELLES TOUR

Have you wondered about a tropical paradise?



Plus! Interview with Dr. Haffar from Nakheel,
DMEX Announcement, EDA's new car and more...

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DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Please note that EDA's newsletter, "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 newsletter 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 edition of "Divers for the Environment" released in March 2005. Send all articles/comments to Head Office edadiver@emirates.net.ae

Dear All,

I would like to extend my congratulations on EDA's accreditation to UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). EDA can now participate effectively as an observer in the UNEP GC/GMEF.

Indeed, the United Nations Environment Program owes a lot to the non-governmental organizations in the field of policy design.

In this context, EDA is now considered an accredited nongovernmental organization (NGO). We will have the possibility to:

1. Submit written inputs into the unedited working documents of UNEP's GC/GMEF.
2. Submit written statements to the work of UNEP's GC/GMEF.

In addition to being an accredited NGO, EDA will be invited to the Global Civil Society Forum to be held from 19 to 20 February 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as to the UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be held from 21 to 25 February 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya.

EDA & UNEP

1. In Collaboration with UNEP-ROWA, EDA started the Reef Monitoring Project in the east coast of UAE.
www.emiratesdiving.com
2. Participating in the; NGO regional Forum in preparation for The World Summit On Sustainable Development - WSSD (Rio+10), prepared by UNEP, Manama, Bahrain, September 2001.
3. Participating in the; Parliamentarian Forum Towards Good Governance for Sustainable Development in Preparation for The World Summit On Sustainable Development - WSSD (Rio+10), prepared by UNEP, Beirut, Lebanon, November 2001.
4. Participating in the; NGO Regional Forum in Preparation for The World Summit On Sustainable Development - WSSD (Rio+10), prepared by UNEP, Amman, Jordan, July 2002.
5. Participating in the; Global Youth Gathering in Nairobi, February 2003, and hosting of the Youth Advisor West Asia.
6. Participating in the Global Youth Gathering in Russia, August 2003, Youth Advisor - West Asia.
7. Organizing and hosting of the Environmental Global Youth Gathering - Dubai 2004, January 2004.
8. Participating as Focal Point for the Civil Society of West Asia in the GCSF; 8th meeting of UNEP GC in Jeju - Korea, March 2004.
9. Participating as a main speaker in the Global Forum for Sports and the Environment in Lahore - Pakistan, November 2004.



Eco Regards,

Ibrahim N. Al-Zu'bi

Director - Environment & Research Dept.
Emirates Diving Association

COMMENTS FROM **DIVERS DOWN**

East Coast Mooring's

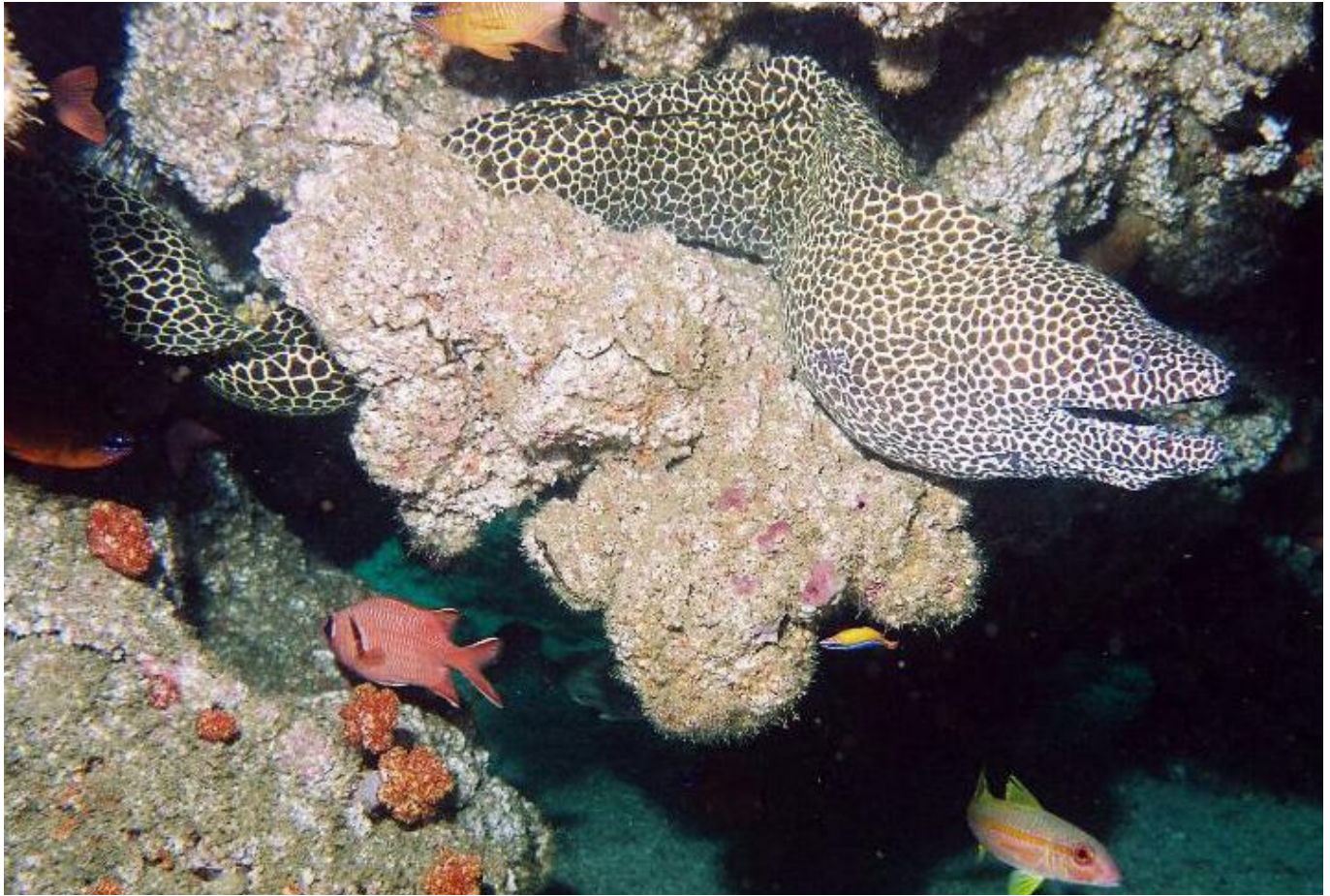


Photo by Sandy Chestnut Car Cemetery Honey Comb Moray

Three moorings are now in place on the East coast, two at Martini Rock and one at Car Cemetery.

These have been well used and have proven to be an efficient method of minimising structural damage to hard & soft corals around dive sites. In the past anchors were used at dive sites which damaged the environment e.g. Martini Rock and it's array of soft corals.

Initially, there were a few problems with the moorings launched at Martini Rock: as many as 3 boats would tie on the mooring at one time, which caused the heavy mooring foundations to move. It is encouraging that these boat users wanted to use the mooring buoys however no more than 2 boats should tie up at a time.

Car Cemetery is a great dive and, as one of the oldest artificial reefs on the East Coast, it offers much life. However it is one of the least dived sites. It can be prone to bad 'viz' and some currents, but it is always a dive that produces something new to see each time. We are wary that individuals will remove the resident fish and eels from this site so we urge people to leave it intact.

The greatest problem we experience with new mooring buoys is that they are sometimes removed! This is saddening, as it counteracts our efforts to help the marine environment. Perhaps a sign saying "this buoy is attached to a world war 2 mine" will be the only way to stop people from cutting the buoys.

There are more sites in desperate need of moorings like Coral Gardens and Shark Island and it is hoped to do these soon. So if you fancy lifting big blocks of concrete on and off our boat, let us know and you will be most welcome to assist us in the hard but worthwhile work of mooring laying.

If you are not an operator on this coast then please be aware that the moorings are here and they will save the environment at the dive sites, so please use them and not your anchors. Divers also remember to dive with good buoyancy and be careful of the environment. One diver walking on or around Martini will do just as much damage as an anchor; we know because we see people do it every day!

Take a PADI Peak Performance Buoyancy course, it will help you with your diving, buoyancy and reduce the air you use, in turn saving the marine life you would normally kick to death. It can be done in 2 dives and is credited towards your Master Scuba Diver.

Thank you EDA for your help in saving our environment, and let's hope 2005 will be a good year for our Oceans.



Divers Down (at Oceanic Hotel)
Khor Fakkan, Sharjah, UAE
Tel 09-2370299 Fax 09-2370194
Email: ddown@emirates.net.ae
Website: www.diversdown.tk



Photo by Sue Giles Martini Rock

SUPPORT FROM CHEVROLET



EDA are pleased to announce another year of support by Chevrolet. Chevrolet donated a Tahoe ZR Series, equipped with the famous Vortec 5300 V8 engine that delivers 324 horse power car to EDA for 2005.

This years design replaces the familiar underwater fish design with a beautiful blue diving one.

Sincere thanks to Chevrolet for your continued support.

EDA are pleased to announce the upcoming Dive Middle East Exhibition

DMEX

10th – 11th May 2005

Under the Patronage of Sheikh Maktoum Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum
www.dmex2005.com

DMEX 2005 Exhibition aims to be the largest trade, commercial and dive enthusiast event in the world.

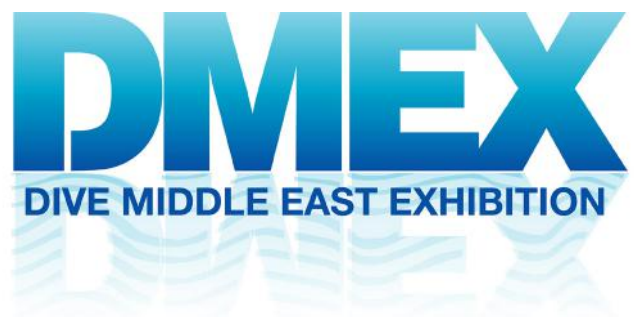
It will offer the most comprehensive international marketplace for the diving industry, giving companies the opportunity to showcase and demonstrate products and services to businesses and individuals interested in all diving products, services and holidays.

DMEX will promote all aspects of diving in the region and present Dubai as a hub for the industry, a platform where business gets done.

We would like to extend to all our members an invitation to be part of the shaping of DMEX for this coming year and the future years. Today we launch to you the **www.dmex2005.com** web site. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Watch this space for more information and EDA talks/forums concerning DMEX.

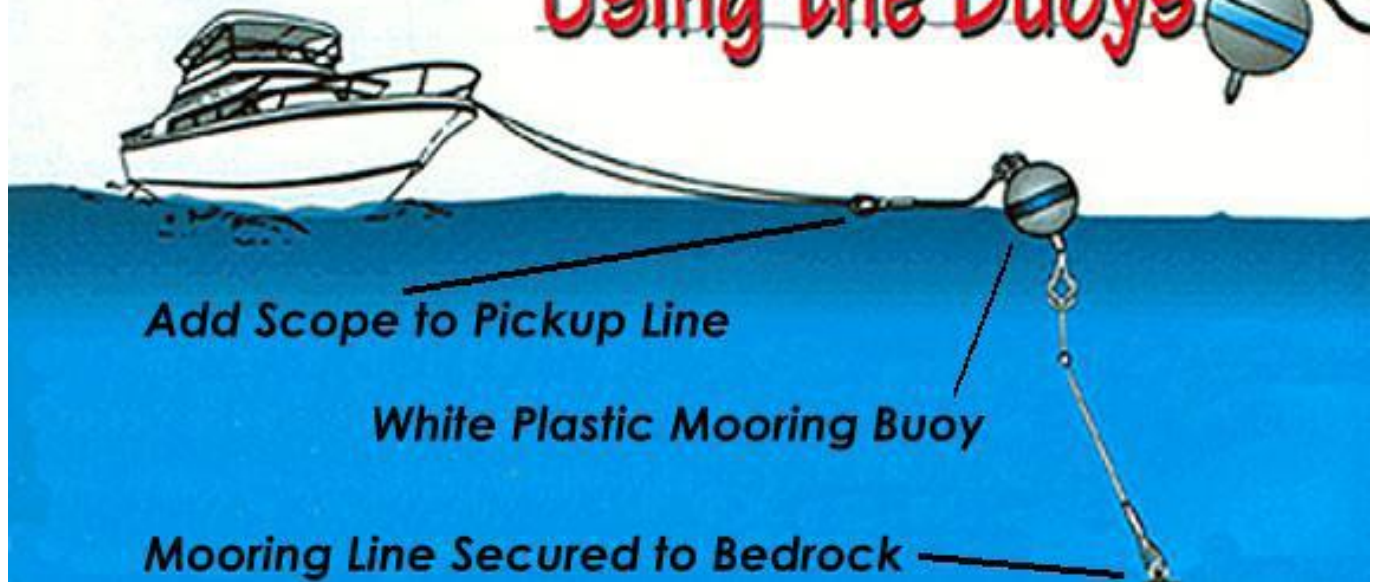
For more information you can contact Mohammed Bitar, **diving@emiratesdiving.com** at the EDA office on: +971 4 393 9390.

For information from NettResults, the event organisers, you can contact Nick Leighton, **nick@dmex2005.com** on: +971 4 332 4874.



<- Wind or Current Direction

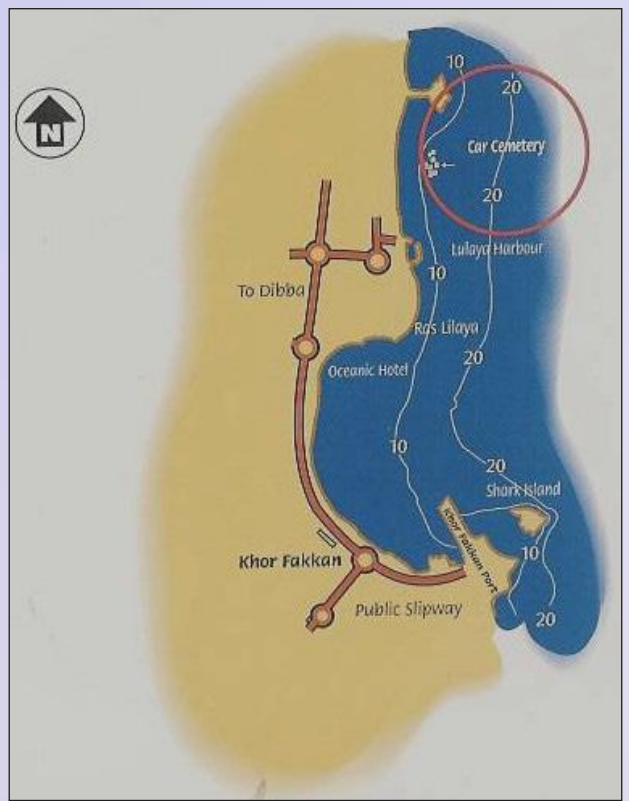
Using the Buoys



MOORING BUOYS ALLOW BOATERS TO TIE UP NEAR THE REEF WITHOUT DROPPING ANCHORS ON IT. ANCHORS TEAR UP THE REEF AND KILL LIVING CORAL. TO USE A BUOY:

1. When using a buoy, approach it against the wind or current; whichever has the most effect on the boat's course. Approach the buoy head-on without being pushed to the side by the wind or current. The mooring line will be pointed in the direction of the current.
2. The length of the mooring line is for easy pickup and does not allow for enough scope. Never tie your boat directly to the buoy mooring line, as you may be endangering the boat as well as placing too much stress on the buoy system. Always use a line from the boat to the buoy mooring line.
3. With the proper amount of scope, the buoy is not pulled under the water by the action of the boat and the line from the boat to the buoy will bow. It is especially important for all boats to allow for extra scope during rough weather.
4. As you tie up to the buoy, inspect the mooring line to make certain the system is secure and lines are intact.
5. As when using an anchor, someone should always remain on the boat and that person should know how to operate the boat. Remember, as the captain of your boat, you are ultimately responsible for your boat.
6. Buoys are installed in favorite recreational areas. Whenever you are in buoy areas, maneuver at idle speed only and watch for swimmers and divers.
7. Buoys are not intended as markers for the reef. Do not drop an anchor next to a buoy, as this is a living reef area. If all the buoys are in use and you must anchor, make certain you are anchoring in a sandy area.
8. When releasing your vessel from a buoy, maneuver away slowly, making certain that you don't run over the mooring buoy or line.
9. Buoys are for everyone on a first-come, first-serve basis and are intended for half-day usage. Please be considerate!

Source: Ocean Watch Foundation



Car Cemetery

Mohammed Bitar tying to a mooring buoy



Mohammed Bitar putting a buoy together

MOORING BUOY DEPLOYED AT CAR CEMETERY E.COAST

This site hosts a rich array of marine life with a maximum depth of 17 meters. Car Cemetery is a graveyard for wrecked cars that was created in 1988 to form an artificial reef and a special site for fishing. There are about 200 vehicles and an area of 60 square meters is covered with nucleus.

On the 2nd October 2004, a mooring buoy and chain were deployed at Car Cemetery. It was designed to hold at least 2-3 diving boats. A submerged truck chassis & engine block were wrapped three times in chain and clipped with an 8 mm S.S (D shackle). A plastimo buoy was attached at the surface as a marker. A 10 mm thick mooring rope was also provided for boaters to tie onto.

FUTURE MOORING BUOY SITES

Two dive sites along the West Coast of Dubai will receive mooring buoys at the end of December. These sites are currently being used by Dive Centers of Dubai:

1. HOPPER BARGE
2. NEPTUNE



Seven Seas Diving attached to a mooring buoy

ADDITIONAL SITES ALONG THE EAST COAST WILL RECEIVE MOORING BUOYS DURING 2005

EDA'S SEYCHELLES FAMILIARIZATION TOUR

By Kathleen Russell, EDA Member (Al Masaoood Marinesports)



Brigadier Khalfan Khalfan Al Mohiari, Mohammed Bitar, Warren Baverstock, Kathleen Russell, Lee Andrews, Maher Al Wazir

Have you wondered about a tropical paradise spread over a million plus square kilometers just south of the equator? Only a short 4.5hr flight from Dubai, romantic travelers and adventure divers will discover an amazing destination with breath taking scenery and some wonderful diving. Welcome to the Seychelles, a warm and friendly nation where you are regularly greeted with smiles.

In late November 2004, Seychelles Tourism Office in Dubai arranged a familiarization trip for Emirates Diving Association members. Brigadier Khalfan Khalfan Al Mohiari (Financial Director, EDA), Mohammed Bitar (Dive Co-ordinator for EDA), Lee Andrews (Al Boom Diving), Warren Baverstock (Curator for Burj Al Arab Aquarium), Maher Al Wazir (Dive Co-ordinator for GASCO) and Kathleen Russell (Al Masaoood Marine and Engineering) were the intrepid divers who participated in the trip. With underwater cameras, strobes, underwater video equipment, excess weighted dive equipment and SLRs in total, Nathalie from Seychelles Tourism bid the group bon voyage as we headed south towards the equator:

Let me first tell you a bit about the Seychelles. It is an island nation, which is situated just south of the equator on a pre-historic landmass referred to as Gondwanaland. The climate is both pleasant and tropical and does not have the typhoon storms like in South East Asia. The main islands, Mahe, Praslin (pronounced MA' HAY and PRA' LEN) and La Digue make up the Inner Islands and the southerly group of islands are part of the Outer Islands consisting of sand cays and beautiful coral islands. Most islands are accessible by boats and liveaboards.

The divers stayed the first night at Coral Strand Hotel and were greeted with welcome drinks by the hospitable Duty Manager, Richard and General Manager, Manfred. They invited us to experience a lovely Indian meal in the Island's only Indian restaurant in town. David Rowat and Glynis owners of the Underwater Dive Centre also joined us for the meal and gave us an insight on the dive sites we were to embark on.

The following day, we finally boarded the Bahia, a Voyager 500 sailing catamaran. This was to be our home for the next few



Photo by Frank Schnieder



The "Bahia" Sailing Catamaran



La Digue, Photo by Luis Davilla

DECEMBER 2004

days, eating, sleeping and diving around the Inner Islands. We were given an orientation to the Bahia and we were introduced to the 3-man crew whom would accompany us and eventually become our lasting friends with whom we share great memories. Dan was the Captain, an unassuming Seychellois with a lot of knowledge of the local waters. Paul our Dive Master who gave very thorough site briefings and Dean was the chef who could give Delia Smith a run for her money. Angel Fish Ltd and Angel Fish Dive Centre run the yacht charter and dive services. Together quality was never compromised.

THE DIVE SITES around the Inner Islands are diverse and offer a unique experience to dive the impressive granite reefs. A few world known sites include the Ennerdale wreck in North Mahe, Shark Bank and Brissare. Another top site is Shark Point on the south side of Marianne Island, a small island near La Digue. The granite rock formations are a spectacular site. The cathedral like rocks drop down to the sandy bottom. An abundant number of grey reef, white tip sharks and occasional nurse sharks are common encounters.

THE MARINE LIFE is impressive both in abundance and diversity. Being relatively remote in the Indian Ocean, divers will find an abundance of yellow snappers, soldier fish, squirrelfish, and many varieties of butterfly, angelfish and parrotfish. Divers have the pleasure of seeing Napoleon wrasse swim by, feeding Humphead parrotfish and giant groupers and 2m plus giant marbled stingrays resting on the sandy bottom. The large rock formations provide much habitat for the invertebrates living in the area. Spiny lobsters, octopus and a plethora of nudibranchs were frequently sighted. One of the highlights was the shoal of 50 plus eagle rays at Shark Bank. They negotiated through the current and one by one lowered their noses to the sandy bottom to feed on the crustaceans. Other eventful moments if you catch the right season are the abundance of whale shark encounters. The Marine Conservation Society, Seychelles has an active whale shark monitoring program. These gentle giants generally are well spotted in June to August and then again in November to January.

THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE is breath taking especially when you discover places like Anse Source D'argent Beach on La Digue with its beautiful granite boulders lying on sun-kissed sandy beaches and Anse Lazio beach on Praslin with its supernatural beauty. For the land enthusiasts, a mountain bike ride around La Digue offers a glimpse of the historical sites like

the vanilla plantation, old cemetery, ox-cart transports, land tortoise aged between 30-90 years old and luxuriant vegetation covering the island. Praslin also offers great walking sites like the Vallee De Mai. As one of the smallest Natural World Heritage Sites, it is home to the famous Coco de mer palm and endemic black parrot bird.

It was a wonderful and fulfilling trip for everyone. It is a place one can absorb the tranquil beauty of nature and experience the excitement beneath the waves. We hope you will have the same awe-inspiring experience as we had in the friendly island nation, Seychelles. Again, on behalf of Emirates Diving Association, we extend our sincere thanks to Seychelles Tourism Office (Dubai), Travel Services Seychelles, Coral Strand Hotel, Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay and Achim and Kolyia of Angel Fish Ltd. and Angel Fish Dive Centre and the crew of the Bahia, Dan, Paul and Dean.

**DISCOVER AN AMAZING
DESTINATION WITH
BREATH TAKING
SCENERY AND SOME
WONDERFUL DIVING**



Photo by Garry Jean Baptiste

Praslin

AN OVERVIEW OF 5 YEARS DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE RESERVE AL FAQEET (DIBBA ROCK)

by Kurt Luedi

We first arrived at the East Coast in October 1999 and moved into the dive center at the Holiday Beach Motel. We were surprised to learn that Dibba Rock, situated parallel to our center was a marine reserve. This reserve did not afford any protection from anchoring, fishing, trawling, nets, shell collecting, spear gunning, all of which were common practices.

With a lot of personal effort and the support of Dibba Municipality, we set a number of moorings around Dibba Rock (previously there was only one). Together we identified and marked out the borders of the marine reserve with foam blocks and buoys.

The marine life at Dibba Rock is immense. Green and Hawksbill turtles can be seen, black tip reef sharks are common and there is a great coverage of coral. Every year the shoals of fish seem to be increasing. Recently the Dibba Municipality set up huge signs at the beaches in the marine reserve Al Faqet, saying, that fishing is prohibited. The Municipality's boat now controls the marine reserve each day, highlighting the rules of the reserve to any persons violating them. Almost all the local fishermen now respect the reserve and understand its importance. I would like to thank the Dibba Municipality and all their helping hands for their engagement for the Dibba Rock Reserve.

So, is the reserve rescued for the future generations? With such advances protecting the marine reserve, you could almost expect everything to be perfect now.

This is far from the reality as there is still much to be done. We are witnessing a new threat: Diving Tourism. It is increasing at Dibba Rock. On a busy Friday morning some 5 boats can be seen at Dibba Rock, providing the needs of over 80 divers in one day. With this increase in diving tourism it is even more important, to minimize the impacts on the reef ecosystem.

We continually see anchors thrown into the corals from new diving boats, which don't know the area. We know the area. We have been diving here for years. People think that they are anchoring in areas of sand...but in fact there are corals there. There is no need to anchor here; we have provided so many moorings. We also see snorkelers standing on the corals. We see the remnants of people's lunch (plastic bottles, floating orange peel, gabs, aluminum foils etc.) on the sea surface and later snagged on the corals.

Obviously there is still a lot of campaigning, supervising and educating to do. This is not solely in the hands of the Authorities. It is in the hands of nature lovers, the dive centers, the guides and staff of the diving boats. Dive centers should give their guests clear information about the reserves, its history, the threats and how to behave. Diving and snorkeling guests should use their right to complain to a dive center if the staff or other customers act inappropriately (anchoring, feeding fish, speeding with the boat over the divers and the turtles).



Kurt Luedi



Green Turtle

Our urgent request to all divers are: take care what you are doing in the water (turtles are not underwater scooters) and have neutral buoyancy at all times while diving.

LOOK, BUT DON'T TOUCH! (By the way: Why are you wearing gloves?)

Happy diving and snorkeling, I wish you a prosperous New Year,
Kurt Luedi

Margrit & Kurt
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Holiday Beach Motel
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E-Mail: maku@emirates.net.ae
www.makudive.com



FEMALE DOMINATION? BECAUSE OF YOUR PLASTIC?

- WOMEN MAY RULE -

Over 100 species of marine vertebrates and some invertebrate species have been reported to suffer the effects of entanglement in marine debris resulting in serious injury, death by starvation, drowning or suffocation. Pieces of litter e.g. balloons, plastic bags and plastic pellets mistakenly ingested by marine species and sea birds can cause: infections, fatal blockages of an animal's digestive system and starvation. In addition plastic can cause an additional threat to wildlife: bioaccumulation of toxic substances associated with the plastic.

Chemicals found in Plastics, Packaging, Shampoos and Pesticides have been accumulating in the environment. Instead of breaking up or being eliminated after consumption they accumulate in higher concentrations. These chemicals then react on an organism's endocrine system. An endocrine system is a network of glands in the body that release hormones (chemical signals, which regulate biological processes like, growth, mental development, sexual maturation, and immune function).

First noted in Whelkes (pale brown molluscs), the increasing prevalence of chemicals associated with plastics have been found to mimic the female hormone OESTROGEN when ingested. Fish are particularly susceptible to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) as much of it enters the aquatic & marine environment. A recent survey focusing on rivers in the UK found a third of male fish to be growing female reproductive tissues and organs, with pronounced results in the juvenile species. As a result populations of many species are heading towards a unisex existence.

The effects of these now coined "gender-bending" chemicals are expressed through: a lower sex drive, a decrease in the size of the male's genitals and the transformation of parts of the testes into ovary tissue.

Scientists & conservationists alike stress that such effects reach higher up the food marine mammals. Birth infant deaths have already been found in male dolphins from the North Sea, UK. Species of birds which feed on fish are also likely to experience reproductive anomalies (varying shell strength), and the honeybee, an important pollinator of plants, has already been found to display a lower sex drive, resulting in fewer eggs being laid by the queen after exposure to endocrine disruptors.

It is likely that the effects of individual chemicals and chemical cocktails have been underestimated and are now accumulating in the marine environment. We should give some serious consideration as to the future of our fish stocks, potential implications on human health, and perhaps the longevity of our rich oceans. Female domination may not be what the seas really need.

Further information:

**[http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/
endocrine/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/endocrine/index_en.htm)**

CLEAN UP ARABIA

16th - 17th SEPTEMBER 2004





Group of volunteers who helped clean up the beaches and dive sites

Emirates Diving Association held it's 9th Annual Clean Up Arabia this year. The event was supported by over 500 volunteers who helped rid the beaches, dive sites and a marine reserve (in Abu Dhabi, Dibba and Fujairah) of unsightly and dangerous debris.

The weekend gave people a chance to be proactive in environmental activities, in addition to providing a fun day out.

The debris items gathered were categorised and counted by volunteers. This information provides an indication to the sources of the marine debris, which can then be targeted for education and pollution prevention campaigns.

Shoreline & Recreational Activities, Smoking-Related Activities and Dumping Activities seem to have left the most debris.

The results indicate plastic bottles, cigarettes, and bags constituted the majority of marine debris.

**THE EVENT WAS SUPPORTED BY
OVER 500 VOLUNTEERS WHO
HELPED RID THE BEACHES,
DIVE SITES AND A MARINE
RESERVE OF UNSIGHTLY AND
DANGEROUS DEBRIS**



Volunteers cleaning up the beaches

% ITEMS OF DEBRIS COLLECTED

20.84	Beverage Bottles (plastic) 2 litres or less
12.49	Cigarettes/Cigarette Filters
9.25	Bags
7.24	Caps, Lids
6.70	Cups, Plates, Forks, Knives, Spoons
6.59	Beverage Cans
5.80	Rope
5.72	Food Wrappers/Containers
4.32	Beverage Bottles (glass)
2.63	Plastic Sheeting/Tarps
2.48	Tyres
2.23	Cigar Tips
1.40	Oil/Lube Bottles
1.40	Tobacco Packaging/Wrappers
1.37	Building Materials
0.97	Straws, Stirrers
0.90	Fishing Line
0.86	Buoys/Floats
0.76	Strapping Bands
0.61	Cars/Car Parts
0.54	Clothing, Shoes
0.50	Appliances (refrigerators, washers, etc.)
0.47	Balloons
0.47	Crab/Lobster/Fish Traps
0.40	Shotgun Shells/Wadding
0.40	Steel Rope
0.40	Plastic Pipes
0.32	Pull Tabs
0.32	Fishing Nets
0.22	Fishing Lures/Light Sticks
0.18	55-Gal. Drums
0.11	Bait Containers/Packaging
0.11	Pallets
0.11	Cigarettes Lighters
0.07	Toys
0.07	Bleach/Cleaner Bottles
0.07	Batteries
0.07	Diapers
0.07	Syringes
0.07	Sponges (Foam Pieces)
0.07	Hangers
0.04	6-Pack Holders
0.04	Crates
0.04	Light Bulbs/Tubes
0.04	Condoms
0.04	Scooters
0.04	Coconuts
0.04	Mops
0.04	Broom Heads
0.04	Metal Waste Paper Bins
0.04	Cables
0.04	Steel Crates
0.00	Tampons/Tampon Applicators
0.00	Iron Rods

100 Total

Have a free cap and t-shirt



A female Green Turtle was found dead on the beach during the clean up



People of all ages helped



Divers ready to clean Dibba's Harbour



EDA VISITS RASHID SCHOOL FOR BOYS

The Emirates Diving Association met with thirty 11-12yr old children from the Rashid School for Boys on October 26th as part of the class's Environmental Unit. The Unit focused on two indicator species: the dugong and the sea turtle.

After much research using books and the internet, the class joined EDA on a trip to the Madinat Jumeirah Turtle Rehabilitation Unit. The unit houses sick and injured turtles until they are healthy enough to be released. Our visit coincided with the National Marine Aquariums feeding program and staff members talked about the 7 Hawksbill and 1 Green turtle currently residing in the seawater enclosure.

Back in the classroom, EDA's marine biologist led an interactive group tutorial. Together, the class filled in a turtle quiz, which stimulated discussion and clarified what the children had seen/learnt whilst viewing the turtles.

The class managed to hold their breath from a range of 12sec - 1min ½, demonstrating that humans are poorly adapted to the marine environment compared with a turtle which, when sleeping can rest at the bottom for up to 2hours. The boys were allowed to handle a green turtle's shell and skull that had been brought in.

These bright and enthusiastic boys are now well informed about: the species of turtles living and breeding in the Gulf, how to differentiate between the different species, how to tell a male from a female turtle, they know what turtles eat, where they lay their eggs, and most importantly what factors are threatening their existence and what means of protection we can provide, individually, regionally, and nationally.

Are you? Why not down load the quiz from our website <http://www.emiratesdiving.com/SchoolQuiz.htm> and see if you can fill it in.



Warren from the Madinat Jumeirah talking to the children



Laura Bates giving her interactive class tutorial



Laura Bates with the Rashid School for Boys





EDA member asks a question



WWF ask a question

NAKHEEL TALKS TO EDA

EDA wanted to offer a regular activity where members have the opportunity to hear prominent figures in Dubai speak on topical and innovative subjects broadly related to the marine environment.

The Emirates Diving Association held its first monthly talk for its members on 8th September, 2004. More than 80 people gathered at the Dusit Dubai Hotel, to meet Dr Haffar, Manager of Research and Development at Nakheel.

Dr Haffar had agreed to speak on issues surrounding Nakheel and coastal development in relation to the Arabian Gulf. Excitement rose as this gathering was the first time dive companies, environmentalists and the general public would have a chance to hear first hand about coastal development along the West Coast of Dubai.

The hour-long slot scheduled for the talk meant Dr Haffar had to give a rather general synopsis of various Nakheel projects. Frustrations were eased when the topic turned to the specifics of the Palm Islands during an interactive and professional Q&A session. Questions were raised about: the effects on the marine environment, the negative effects on the Jebel Ali Marine Sanctuary, mitigation efforts to combat the effects of construction, and what Nakheel could do to reassure existing dive companies regarding the future and longevity of the industry and dive sites.

Dr Haffar responded diplomatically. He demonstrated instruments used by leading scientists during baseline studies and current monitoring research. He listened to the anxieties of the dive centers and suggested further dialogue between Nakheel, in addition to the possibility of sharing dive sites in the future.

We must remember however that Nakheel are only the implementers of 'Dubai's vision'. If the vision is disagreeable to some, then Nakheel cannot be held to task, but we can ask such pertinent bodies to take into consideration the needs of the dive centers and the needs of the marine environment.



Nakheel meet EDA



An attentive audience



Speeches



Dr. Haffar talks to EDA

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

A THREE-PART SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INDIVIDUALS IN DUBAI'S DEVELOPMENT

To most people in the diving community Nakheel is a Crown of Thorns starfish in their side. The impacts of the development company's aquatic projects like the Palm and the World are beginning to show, and most of them are underwater. EDA has sent a letter to Nakheel detailing how long-time dive sites have been eradicated or are under stress. I recently did my PADI Open Water certification here in Dubai and found myself struggling for visibility and stability as a strong current played havoc with our training. My instructor, a resident for the last eight years, explained how it was never like this before construction on the projects began. He hypothesized that the ocean must duck and dive around the projects in an irregular fashion, which increases the speed and strength of the current.

What about the beaches that were once idyllic places of sea, sun and sand? Access to beachfront is decreasing rapidly, as is the quality of beaches that are left. On a recent excursion I felt a slimy substance squish between my toes as I waded into the water. When I pulled out a handful of the stuff I was shocked to see that it was grey and cement-like. This is likely due to deep underwater dredging that leaves churned up sediment to settle on the seabed close to the shore. We looked out toward The Palm and saw the floodlights come on, enabling work to continue past sundown. The company furiously building while the sea choked on its runoff. Isn't it ironic that Nakheel's projects aim to provide more beaches for sun-hungry tourists, when the cost is the detriment of the beaches that already exist?

Communicating with "the other side" is useful because it reduces reliance on assumption, and may turn out to be quite surprising. I had the privilege of interviewing Dr. Imad Haffar, Manager of Research and Development at Nakheel. First of all, I must say I was impressed with his vast knowledge and surprised at his conviction for the environment. He is a diver and has personally conducted some of the base-line studies detailing marine life in the company's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Required by law, and supposedly available to the public

if they request it, the EIA is a prediction of the impact the project will have on the environment. According to Haffar, Nakheel does not want to preserve what marine life currently exists, but wants to improve it.

He cited a number of ways in which the marine life will be enhanced by the projects. Namely, that fish will be attracted to the artificial reef that at 65km will be the largest man-made reef in the world. Four themed dive sites with novelties like pyramids and Roman columns dotting the seabed will attract both human and aquatic interest. Furthermore, a team of researchers from the University of Bonn (Germany) is conducting experiments to improve the growth rate of coral reefs that have suffered bleaching due to high temperatures and marine scavengers.

That said, how far from the shores of the projects did their EIA take into account? Is it possible that the mal effects I noted earlier (rapid current and grey sediment) are already beyond the company's halo of protection? Will the fish be able to adapt to the changes in their habitat? I am certain Nakheel is interested in increasing the numbers and variety of fish around its projects as diving is one of the main tourist draws to the islands. However, I am not convinced that they are improving the overall health of the oceans with their work. A project of their magnitude cannot be beneficial, no matter how "green" the packaging.

Haffar explained to me that Nakheel wants to operate transparently and is open to discussion over the environment question. In fact, it is quite important for the company to be perceived as environmentally friendly, and the media has been of assistance in this matter. Most articles about the projects read like advertisements and do not question the depth of the company's professed environmental initiatives. For example, in our interview Haffar proudly showcased the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the company and the United Nations University (UNU) to build an ecological management strategy for the Palm Island. The underlying idea

is that an educational body, and one associated with the premier international body on the planet, will be able to provide a non-corporate and therein, impartial perspective on Nakheel's work. The UNU website does not mention Nakheel directly but shows a picture of the Palm project. Unfortunately, it appears to be more "bark than bite" as the stated objective of the project is to develop a framework for sustainable coastal management. Having a framework is one thing, using it is another. To be fair, there is some action taking place in the form of on-going monitoring, but it is not clear from the website where they will be looking, what they'll be looking for and what will be done in the event that the marine life shows signs of wear. While this partnership is exciting considering companies and international organizations do not normally join forces, it is not enough to verbally state a link. Real work must be done to maintain the credibility of both parties.

To give credit where it is due, Nakheel is doing more for the environment than I had initially imagined. They use 11 pollution indicators (such as sound, smell and sight) and have installed some very sophisticated technology to dispose of and recycle wastes. And they have Haffar! He is doing his best to raise the environmental bar at the company and establish it as a pioneer in urban development and coastal management. It is important to get many different perspectives on projects like the Palm and the World for the best opinions are those which are informed. Feelings of helplessness emerge when there is recognition of the problem but not of the solution. Establishing a dialogue is a good place to begin searching for one.

Aimee Holmes

JOKE: “Why did the lobster blush? Because the sea-weeed!”



Reef Monitoring

UPCOMING EVENTS

MONTHLY TALKS: 14TH DECEMBER



EDA were excited to offer members the chance to spend an evening with guest speaker: Jonathan Ali Khan.

Jonathan is an impressive marine filmmaker and founder of Ocean World Productions here in Dubai.

<http://www.oceanworld.ae>

For the last two years he and his team have been working on creating the regions first wildlife film titled "Arabia's Cycle of Life". The 12, half-hour episodes are to be screened at the beginning of next year on ShowTime TV.

Jonathan agreed to give EDA members a sneak preview of one of the episodes entitled: "Monsoon Seas"

Date: 14th December 2004

Time: 7:30pm

Location: Dar Al Nadwa, Bastakia Area, Bur-Dubai.

(All invitations were sent out to EDA members via Email. If you did not receive it, please contact the EDA office and give them your correct email address, thank you.)

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT GATHERING



The Emirates Diving Association (EDA) in association with the Naturalization & Residency Administration Dubai Immigration and in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the Regional Office of West Asia (UNEP-ROWA) will be organizing a six day global environmental gathering on occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the EDA commitment to marine conservation from the specific dates of 29/1-3/2/2005.

REEF MONITORING PROJECT

Every 3 months EDA will be selecting a few dedicated individuals to join the Reef Monitoring Project.

If you are interested to join, start to dive regularly and get familiar with the marine species in the region. Also, ensure you have good buoyancy, so that you never damage the reef. Divers with good diving practice will only be accepted so start perfecting your skills.

If you are interested in being trained, you can contact EDA's office and express your interest. Also, see Website for more details.



NEW EDA MEMBER

Erna Magbanua from Bacolod, Phillipines (meaning city of Smile).

She has just been employed as EDA's new Secretary.

Contact Details: 04-3939390



Chairperson Mr Faraj Butti Al Muhairbi

Vice Chairperson Mr Essa Al Ghurair

The Secretary General Mr Jamal Bu Hannad

Financial Director Mr. Khalfan Khalfan Al Mohiari

Head of the Technical Committee Mr. Omar Al Huraiz

Head of the Scientific Committee Mr. Mohd Al Salfa

Technical Adviser Mr. Ahmed bin Byat

EXECUTIVE TEAM

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Eng. Ibrahim Al Zu'bi

Research Co-ordinator (Marine Biologist) Laura Bates
Email: projects@emiratesdiving.com

Project Co-ordinator (Dive Master) Mohammad Bitar BA
Email: diving@emiratesdiving.com

MISSION STATEMENT

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

LEGISLATION

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

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

CONTACT DETAILS

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OFFSHORE ARABIA 2004

EDA participated in a Regional Conference & Exhibition on Offshore/Coastal Protection - Offshore Arabia 2004 at the Dubai International Exhibition Centre 29 November - 01 December 2004.

<http://offshorearabia.ae/>

EDA's stand received much interest by visitors wishing to know what environmental efforts are being made in the Arab region. It was an opportunity to learn what mechanisms are being employed world wide to prevent and combat oil spills.

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LEARN WHAT MECHANISMS ARE
BEING EMPLOYED WORLD WIDE
TO PREVENT AND COMBAT OIL
SPILLS

One of the most interesting was that by a Switzerland Company called CAL-X Group: providing advanced technologies for a safer environment. CAL-X Group have produced a super absorbent foam to remove liquid pollutants from the aquatic environment. Namely **BlackGreen**, this foam absorbs up to 75 times its weight in liquid pollutants and is 'unsinkable even when saturated'. The expanded polymer foam, pink in colour and dry to touch, absorbs and retains pollutants inside its cells. It is hydrophobic and so ideal for cleaning hydrocarbon pollutants (oil). It works on a basis of absorption, not adsorption. From an environmental stance, **BlackGreen** is not toxic nor is it an irritant if ingested by humans or aquatic animal life. From a commercial stance, the foam is compressible; allowing the recovery of absorbed pollutants. The foam may then be incinerated releasing only Carbon Dioxide and water vapour.

For further information please see:

<http://www.blackgreen.com>

CORAL REEF FUN

EDA are soon to launch a new section to it's website: **CORAL REEF FUN**. It is an interactive and educational means to learning about the reef, with quiz's, colouring in pages and animal maths! It even has advice on what to do if you're stung by a sting ray.

