



EDA

جمعية الإمارات للغوص
Emirates Diving Association

DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

DECEMBER 2007, VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4



IYOR 2008

EDA MEETS WITH ICRAN FOR IYOR 2008

CLEAN UP 2007

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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 March 2008. Send all articles/comments to Head Office: diving@emiratesdiving.com.

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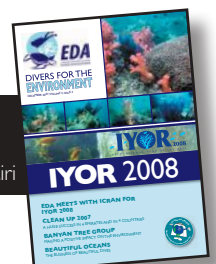
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CORALS IN THE UAE
Photos by Khalfan Khalfan Al Muhairi



SPEAK UP... ACT NOW!



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To protect our planet, we all need to act together; today. Now, the world is in our hands and we need to take care of it, not only for our children, but for ourselves too.

Environmentalists including myself always say "let's protect the planet for generations to come". Most of us never predicted that we would fight to save the planet for ourselves. We thought global warming and climate change will affect the coming generations and not us. I believe we are living the climate change NOW. Katrina and Gonu hurricanes were no freaks of nature. You could even say that most of the natural disasters that the world is experiencing are not natural; they are man-made disasters. Climate change is now officially on the top of governments' agendas. It has made its way to Hollywood, won the Nobel Prize, won the elections and changed governments like in Australia. There are also effects of climate change on aquatic ecosystems, which we will be highlighting in our next issues, as part of our celebration of the International Year of The Reef (IYOR) 2008.

There is still hope – you only need to speak up and act now to help yourself, your family, your community and your planet. You can act by just making small and easy changes in your lifestyle and do your bit to control climate change. There are many simple things you can do in your daily life – what you eat, what you drive, how you build your home – that can have an effect on your immediate surroundings and on places as far away as Antarctica.

On a positive note, EDA has been busy preparing a line up of activities that will be implemented next year in celebration of IYOR 2008. EDA will be a focal point (key point of contact) for the UAE and will be coordinating efforts with the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN). Please read the main feature for this issue and see how you can help EDA with the IYOR 2008 activities.

We have also been in contact lately with Project AWARE and may link up to promote marine conservation in the UAE as well as work on IYOR 2008. Further information will be emailed to members and will be posted in the EDA website.

EDA is also looking forward to promoting the UAE as a premier diving destination with the upcoming Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX) 2008 which is being held alongside the Dubai International Boat Show. We request the diving community to show your support by attending DMEX 2008 and getting to know the local dive businesses, some international dive operators and dive-related suppliers.

Protecting the environment is our number one priority and we have always welcomed contributions from companies and organizations who have worthwhile environmental initiatives. We are pleased to present a number of them in this issue. Please read about the laudable Envirofone campaign and the remarkable conservation efforts of Blue Ventures and Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts and Angsana. We are also fortunate enough to have stumbled on the story of Beautiful Oceans and we are proud to be the first to introduce their business concept of "beautiful dives" to the UAE diving community.

Lastly, we welcome the new EDA marine biologist Rita Bento, who will be helping us on coral reef monitoring and marine reserve projects, while we say goodbye to our long-time secretary, Erna Magbanua.

As 2007 comes to a close, we thank our annual sponsors for their contribution, EDA supporters and our dedicated volunteers who worked on the committees.

We look forward to working with you again next year.

I wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and Eid Adha Mubarak.

Eco Regards,

Ibrahim N. Al-Zu'bi

Here is a list of a few things that you can do to make a difference:

- **Use Compact Fluorescent Bulbs:** Replace 3 frequently used light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. Save 140 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 200 per year.
- **Inflate Your Tires:** Keep the tires on your car adequately inflated. Check them monthly. Save 115 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 3,000 per year.
- **Change Your Air Filter:** Check your car's air filter monthly. Save 360 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 470 per year.
- **Fill the Dishwasher:** Run your dishwasher only with a full load. Save 50 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 140 per year.
- **Use Recycled Paper:** Make sure your printer paper is 100% post consumer recycled paper. Save 2 kg of carbon dioxide per ream of paper.
- **Check your Water Heater:** Keep your water heater thermostat no higher than 50°C. Save 250 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 100 per year.
- **Change the AC Filter:** Clean or replace dirty air conditioner filters as recommended. Save 160 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 550 per year.
- **Take Shorter Showers:** Showers account for 2/3 of all water heating costs. Save 160 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 360 per year.
- **Install a Low-Flow Shower Head:** Using less water in the shower means less energy to heat the water. Save 160 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 550.
- **Buy Products Locally:** Buy locally and reduce the amount of energy required to drive your products to your store.
- **Buy Minimally Packaged Goods:** Less packaging could reduce your garbage by about 10%. Save 550 kg of carbon dioxide and Dhs 4,000 per year.

EDA SUPPORTS DUBAI CARES CAMPAIGN



EDA divers supported the noble campaign by doing what they did best – diving.

This EDA initiative had members diving with a company's banner together with the Dubai Cares logo for the price of Dhs10,000.

Proceeds went directly to the Dubai Cares campaign to raise money for education and give hope to one million children.

EDA would like to thank Dubai Quality Group, Carrefour and RFT for their generous donations.



Carrefour



مجموعة دبي للجودة
Dubai Quality Group

كارفور

GIFT AMOUNT (AED)	EQUIVALENT
20	1 child's school lunch for 2 weeks
50	A child's school physical including vaccinations
100	2 children's school books and supplies for 1 year
250	Train one teacher
500	One student's school fees for 1 year
775	All educational needs for one child for 1 year (fees, physical, books, supplies, and daily lunch)
1,000	Train four teachers - or - School fees for 2 children for a year
2,000	Sports and recreation equipment for a school of 210 students
2,500	Five students' school fees for 1 year
40,000	Renovate and rehabilitate one school
200,000	Build a school for 210 students
500,000	Build a school for 500 students

CARREFOUR UAE

LAUNCHES 'SMALL CHANGE BIG DIFFERENCE' CAMPAIGN

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MAJID AL FUTTAIM (MAF) GROUP

Leading retailer Carrefour introduces reusable bags in nationwide bid to cut down on plastic bag usage



In a push to reduce the millions of plastic bags that pollute the UAE's ecosystem every year, MAF Hypermarkets (Carrefour) recently introduced reusable bags at their checkout counters as an alternative to plastic bags.

Shoppers will be encouraged to purchase their own big reusable bags from Carrefour at the checkout for 2 Dirhams (cost price). If damaged at any point, the bags can be replaced at any Carrefour outlet free of charge.

"It's no secret that plastic bags are one of the major causes of pollution and waste in the world today. We at Carrefour want to contribute by at least encouraging people in the UAE to reduce the amount of plastic bags that they use when shopping at our stores", said Jean Luc Graziato, Vice President of Marketing and Sourcing at MAF Hypermarkets (Carrefour).

He added, "By using the bag 4 times, you will be reducing the usage of plastic bags by 18 per cent. So when you use a Carrefour reusable bag 4 times, the resulting decrease in plastic bag production leads to a reduction in the emission of greenhouse effect gases by 20 per cent. By using the bag 20 times, you will be reducing the usage of plastic bags by 82 per cent."

For his part, Mr. Ibrahim Al Zu' bi, Advisor to the Emirates Diving Association (EDA) said, "The Emirates Diving Association has been working hard over the years to reduce the amount of plastic bags that end up polluting the ecosystem through initiatives such as Clean up Arabia."

"We are very happy that Carrefour is contributing positively to help reduce the amount of plastic bags in the UAE. This initiative

will first help protect the marine environment, especially since plastic bags end up most of the time in the sea. In turn, marine creatures like Turtles and dolphins eat these bags thinking that they are jelly fish which unfortunately leads to their death", concluded Mr. Zu' bi.

MAF Group of companies is an annual sponsor of EDA

**"IT'S NO SECRET
THAT PLASTIC BAGS
ARE ONE OF THE
MAJOR CAUSES OF
POLLUTION AND
WASTE IN THE WORLD
TODAY"**



MARAWAH

THE UAE'S FIRST BIOSPHERE RESERVE

FEATURE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY – ABU DHABI (EAD)



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI

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Abu Dhabi's Marawah Marine Protected Area has become the first in the country to be given the status of a Biosphere Reserve within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) network of global biosphere reserves.

The reserve, which is managed by the Environmental Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), is situated west of Abu Dhabi island and is home to important marine and coastal ecosystems including sea grass beds, coral reefs and mangroves.

With an overall area of 4,255 square kilometers, Marawah is the largest protected area in the Gulf. It is home to Bottlenose and Humpback dolphins and four species of marine turtles, including Green and Hawksbill turtles which use the area for nesting. There are also more than 70 fish and coral species in the area. Visits to Marawah are possible with permission from EAD, which can also authorize diving expeditions.

The reserve also hosts 60 of the second largest population of dugongs in the world. Marawah also has great cultural and archaeological significance as more than 20 sites, dating back to the Stone Age, have been discovered on its various islands.

Marawah was established as a protected area in 2001. The UNESCO announcement followed a meeting of the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme at the organisation's headquarters in Paris, France in September 2007.

During the meeting, over 34 new biosphere reserve proposals were examined. Marawah as well as 22 other new reserve sites were added to the global network, bringing the total number of biosphere reserves around the world to 529 in 105 countries.

Other reserves added to the global network, include Al Reem in Qatar and Jabal Al Rihane in Lebanon.

MORE ON MARAWAH

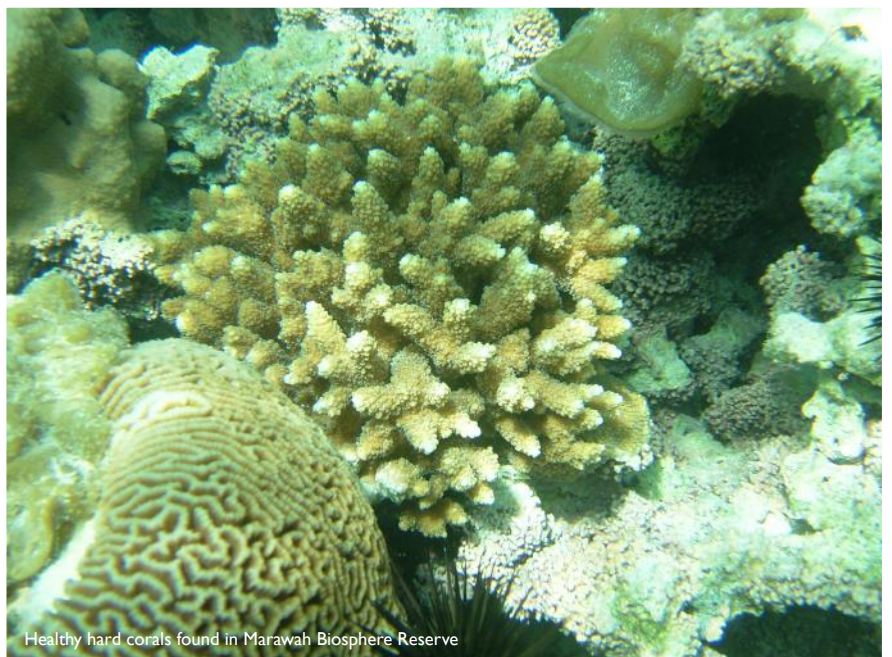
- Marawah is situated west of Abu Dhabi Island. It is surrounded by Abu Al Abyad Island from the east, Seir Bani Yas Island from the west, a highly coastal line from the south, and Jarnain Island from the north.
- There are sites from the Bronze, Iron and the Late Pre-Islamic Ages as well as the Islamic period, covering the whole span of human occupation of the UAE.
- A large Islamic graveyard, with over 60 burials, and an important fragment of pottery from the Late Stone Age has been discovered.
- More than 800 UAE national families live along the protected area's coastal zone, while 107 families live on its islands. Some of these families have traditional rights to fish in the area.



From Left: Mr. Thabit Al Abdessalaam (Director – Marine Environment Research Centre (MERC), Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), HE Majid Al Mansouri (Secretary General – EAD) and Mr. Ashraf Al Cibahy (Manager – MERC, EAD)



Dr. Mark Beech, Head of Division – Cultural Landscapes for Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), at excavation site on Marawah Island



Healthy hard corals found in Marawah Biosphere Reserve

4-DAY TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON DUGONG CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

FEATURE **KATHLEEN RUSSELL – EDA ABU DHABI COMMITTEE COORDINATOR**
PHOTOGRAPHY **COURTESY OF ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI (EAD)**



Thabit Al Abdessalaam speaking in the first session



Dugong Workshop



Dugong Workshop

A four-day technical workshop on conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats throughout the range state was organized by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) along with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) on the 28th-31st of October in Abu Dhabi. Thirty-seven representatives of the dugong range states were in attendance. The workshop was held under the patronage of HH Sheik Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister of the UAE and Chairman of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and was sponsored by Total ABK.

H.E. Majid Al Mansouri, EAD General Secretary, in his opening address, said, "this meeting comes after a series of concurrent workshops concerning the Dugong Conservation and Management Plan in East Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean and West Indian Ocean sub-regions, which marks an important milestone in our efforts towards protection of the dugongs in particular and other important wildlife resources in general, and to find a balance between the conservation and development of our marine environment."

"The meeting's objective was to develop and adopt, and conclude the Workshop with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their habitats throughout their range", emphasized Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Marine Environment Research Center (MERC).

On the final day of the workshop, eight countries signed the MoU on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range. It was a successful conclusion to the four-day meeting.

H.E. Mohammed Saeed Al Kindi, Minister of Environment and Water, signed the MoU on behalf of the UAE. He declared that the MoU will foster regional and international cooperation among the dugong range states especially since the dugong population is seriously threatened throughout the range of the species.

Dugongs are large marine mammals with significant biodiversity value and are one of the four members of the Order Sirenia. They are listed as vulnerable to extinction by The World Conservation Union (IUCN). These gentle giants, weighing up to 400kg, feed almost exclusively on seagrass, which is also under threat from marine pollution and coastal development activities that degrade their habitats. An estimated population of 7000 dugongs occurs in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, 40% of which are found in Abu Dhabi waters. This constitutes the second largest distribution of dugongs outside of Australia, hence making the UAE an important player in worldwide effort to protect the dugongs and their habitats.

EDA is planning to organize for EDA members, field trips and talks about Dugongs in conjunction with EAD-MERC in the upcoming months.

“THE MoU WILL FOSTER REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AMONG THE DUGONG RANGE STATES ESPECIALLY SINCE THE DUGONG POPULATION IS SERIOUSLY THREATENED THROUGHOUT THE RANGE OF THE SPECIES”



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency-ABU DHABI
أبحاث • تنمية • حماية
RESEARCH • DEVELOPMENT • PROTECTION

DIVING

AN ADVANCED SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY A COMPREHENSIVE BOOK ON SCUBA DIVING IN ARABIC



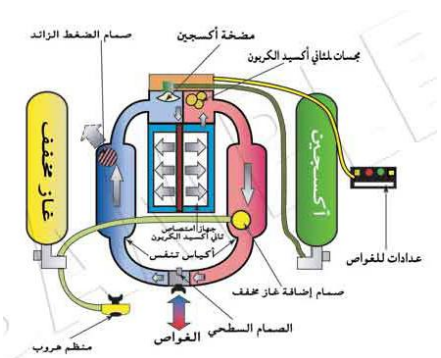
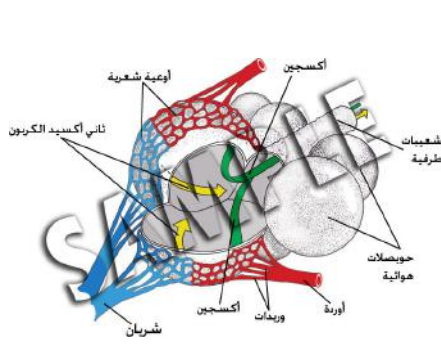
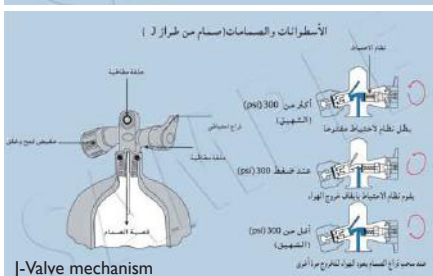
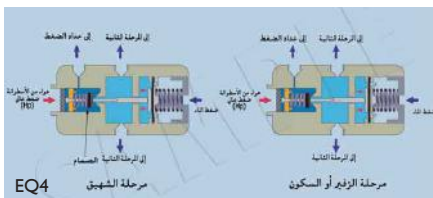
Kamal Eddin E. Mahmoud Abu Ramadan

Kamal Eddin E. Mahmoud Abu Ramadan, the first Arab PADI Course Director and the first Arab IANTD Instructor Trainer, has published "Diving – An Advanced Science & Technology", an Arabic book on scuba diving explained in simple terms.

Drawing on his experience as a diving instructor for 22 years, Kamal saw the need for a comprehensive scuba diving reference that will address the needs of Arabic-speaking divers, dive professionals, sea sports enthusiasts and researchers alike.

Kamal, who is also a certified Hyperbaric Chamber Treatment Operator, reveals that he came out with the book to "impart knowledge on the science and technologies of diving" to help minimize diving accidents, and to give divers and sea lovers a better understanding of the underwater ecosystem and help preserve the marine environment.

The book, which comes in two volumes and is full of photos and illustrations will be exhibited in the Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX) 2008.



FUJAIRAH CONDUCTS OIL SPILL RESPONSE DRILL

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY MARAL KHALED SHURIQI



The Environment Protection and Development Department of Fujairah Municipality, together with Vopak Horizon Fujairah Ltd. (VHFL), Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC), Fairdeal Marine Services Co LLC, Port of Fujairah and the UAE Coastguard, recently conducted an oil spill management drill they dubbed Operation Squid (Al Habbar).

The drill scenario, as proposed by VHFL, one of the world's largest bunkering centres, was related to an incident in 2005 when a vessel drifted away from the Single Point Mooring (SPM) buoy (SPM transfers fluids from an onshore/offshore facility to the moored vessel) after the hawser (the cable or rope used in mooring the vessel) broke. No oil spill happened at that time.

In Operation Squid, there was "moderate to strong winds" and while discharging oil, the vessel drifted away from the SPM, towing the floating hose (oil transfer hose). The main cause of the vessel breakaway was the broken hawser which was damaged from a previous SPM operation or from unreported collision with a small boat or fishing boat, as actual cases have shown recently. As the hawser broke, the chain sprung back, severely hitting the leg of a crew member.

The drill response plan was the immediate

coordination among the VHFL personnel to control the breakaway vessel, deployment of VHFL crew to estimate the spillage quantity and the provision by Fairdeal (the vessel's agent) of a speedboat to transport the injured crew member to the Port of Fujairah clinic. As the VHFL personnel continuously monitored and reported the oil slick movement, Fairdeal deployed a boom (a large float to contain the slick) and a skimmer (a device that siphon's the oil from the ocean's surface).

The oil spill management drill is part of Fujairah Municipality's yearly training in preparation for any future oil spill incidents to protect its rich marine environment, a source of great pride for the emirate.

Editor's Note: explanation of nautical terms (in parenthesis) was mainly sourced from the internet and supplied by the Editor.



KUWAIT OIL COMPANY RECEIVES NAUI'S HIGHEST ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD FOR REEFBALL PROJECT



The National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) recently awarded Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), the Environmental Enrichment Award for their Marine Colony Project. The award was presented at NAUI Awards Ceremony at DEMA 2007 in Orlando, Florida, USA.

The Marine Colony Project, a group of artificial reefs called reef balls, was organized, supported, and promoted by the KOC, in line with the company's aim to preserve, develop and rehabilitate the natural resources of Kuwait.

KOC has already deployed the one thousandth reef ball, marking the event with a ceremony and special banquet graced by the presence of three representatives from NAUI Worldwide: Keith Sliman from the NAUI Board of Directors, Randy Shaw from NAUI Worldwide Headquarters in Tampa, and Michael Tong, president of NAUI Services Pacific Rim.

According to the press release in the NAUI website (http://www.nauiwv.org/news_read.php?ID=76), "... the Marine Colony Project was so successful, both environmentally and from the standpoint of raising public awareness, that it has been extended to the installation of 9,000 additional reef balls in selected offshore areas."

The Marine Colony Project was spearheaded and directed by Wafa'a Al-Huraibi, a member of the Kuwait Oil Company dive team. Wafa'a, an EDA member, is NAUI's first female Course Director in the Middle East. Wafa'a also received a special award from NAUI (see separate story next page).

The KOC Dive Team, an avid supporter of EDA and its activities, exhibited their Marine Colony Project at the Dive Middle East Exhibit (DMEX) 2007 in Dubai early this year.



Wafa'a Al-Huraibi presenting an Appreciation plaque to EDA's Heritage Department Coordinator Juma'a Bin Thalith for EDA's support of the KOC Dive team (Photo courtesy of Wafa'a Al-Huraibi)



Nauwi Worldwide officials with Wafa'a Al-Huraibi during the special banquet held in Kuwait to mark the deployment of the 1000th reef ball (Photo courtesy of Wafa'a Al-Huraibi)



Kuwait Oil Company representatives with NAUI officials during the NAUI Awards Ceremony at DEMA 2007 (Photo courtesy of Wafa'a Al-Huraibi)



Reef Ball Deployment by the KOC Dive Team (Photo courtesy of KOC Dive Team)

EDA MEMBER RECEIVES NAUI ENVIRONMENT ENRICHMENT AWARD



Wafa'a Al-Huraibi, the first female NAUI Course Director in the Middle East, was recently awarded the NAUI Environment Enrichment Award in the individual category at the NAUI Awards Ceremony at DEMA 2007 in Orlando, Florida, USA.

Wafa'a, who works for Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and is a member of the KOC Dive Team, was recognized for spearheading the Marine Colony Project of KOC which also received the same award in the organization category (see separate article on the previous page).

Wafa'a was the first Middle East recipient of the prestigious award, winning over 50,000 international scuba divers who participated in the competition. Wafa'a said that the NAUI Environment Enrichment award was among the top-rated awards given to environmentalists.



Wafa'a receives the NAUI Environmental Enrichment Award from NAUI Chairman Mark Flahan



Wafa'a with NAUI officials at DEMA

ACT NOW

OR THE CLIMATE WILL ACT ON YOU!

FROM ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TO ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT
FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **DINA FAIDI, VOLUNTEER-MEMBERS TRAINING**

EDA participates in the West Asia Civil Society Consultation Meeting, held in Manama, Bahrain on November 11th -14th, 2007.



Dina Faidi

The annual meeting of the West Asia Civil Society Organizations that was held under the umbrella of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) carried a warning.

The meeting's participants, coming from ten countries

around the region, spent three days discussing the challenge of climate change, its effects and the need to act now. We were reminded of the findings of the Fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) report, which says: "There are no major issues raised in Our Common Future for which the foreseeable trends are favorable". This means that humanity's very survival is under threat as well.

With this, participants at the meeting were reminded that the challenge ahead is huge – it might be too late to avoid it altogether, but there is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. That is if we take strong action, now!

UNEP had provided an excellent platform that allowed Regional Civil Society Organizations to sit together and discuss this global issue, in preparation for the ninth Global Civil Society Forum which will be held in Monaco on February, 2008.

The first day of the gathering was dedicated to UNEP experts presenting the findings of the GEO-4, which said: "Twenty years ago, climate change was an emerging issue but today, there is unequivocal evidence of climate change and its impacts are evident". The GEO Process was presented by Dr. Adel Farid Abdel-Kader Regional Coordinator – West Asia UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment. In his presentation, he explained the process taken in developing the report.

As an EDA representative, I was voted to chair the first day, during which we also heard from organizations from Syria, Bahrain and the UAE, talking about regional environmental challenges that they face.

In the afternoon, we discussed the big issue of how to finance the efforts to sustain the climate challenge. The recommendations that we developed will be presented as part of the Civil Society Organizations' statement in the 9th global meeting. Some of them are: use of greener technologies and alternative sources of energy, investment in energy efficiency and green buildings, as well as disaster management.

The following day, through teleconferencing, John Scanlon, Senior Policy Advisor to the executive Director of UNEP, briefed us on the UNEP Medium Term Strategy. Participants raised questions which he answered and the group later on came up with recommendations on the six major points in the strategy which are: climate change, ecosystem management, environmental governance, hazardous substances, environmental dimension of disasters and conflicts, and resource efficiency, which means sustainable consumption and production.

The recommendations for the above six issues will be presented by the four delegates who were elected to attend the 9th Global Civil Society Forum.

On the fourth and last day, we shared ideas on advanced programming and lobbying. The participants enjoyed and appreciated the vast knowledge of Mr. Najib Saab, publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Environment & Development magazine and Mr. Jan Gustav Strandenaes, policy adviser of ANPED.

Dr. Waleed Khalil, Vice Dean of Arabian Gulf University had concluded his presentation with a saying from the great leader Shaikh Zayed Al-Nahyan.

And this is what I would like to use as well as there is no better way to conclude; let it be your food for thought:

"We are responsible for taking care of our environment & wildlife, protect it and preserve it not only for the sake of our current generation, but also for the sake of our children and grandchildren; it is our duty to bear loyalty to our ancestors as well as our successors".
Shaikh Zayed Al-Nahyan

The time to ACT is NOW!



The participants of the annual meeting of West Asia Civil Society Organizations



Dina Faidi, EDA Volunteer – Members Training, facilitated during the first day of the West Asia Civil Society Consultation Meeting



Dr. Adel Farid Abdel-Kader, Regional Coordinator – West Asia UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, presented the GEO Process



The launching of the Fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) during the West Asia Civil Society meeting



Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes conducted a workshop on fund raising for NGO projects



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF (IYOR) 2008

FEATURE INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF ACTION NETWORK (ICRAN)

IYOR 2008 is a worldwide campaign to promote awareness, conservation action, and strengthen long-term support for coral reef conservation. Governments, individuals, corporations, organizations and schools are highly encouraged to participate.

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) will be launching IYOR 2008 during the ICRI General Meeting on the 24th of January in the United States to "kick start" efforts around the world. Official IYOR 2008 launches have also been planned in Japan, Germany and the UAE.

So far, twenty-three countries and twenty-one organizations representing different sectors, (marine/environment conservation, policy, research, and marine tourism), have signed up as focal points (key point of contacts) to facilitate participation in IYOR 2008 activities. The UAE focal points are Emirates Diving Association (EDA) and the Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC Abu Dhabi).

Activities lined up by some countries and organizations range from coral monitoring and symposia to music festivals and "coral" parades.

Here are some of the interesting and varied activities planned by some focal points:

FRANCE

Year-long exhibit about coral reefs and publication of a scientific comic book for free distribution to schools

MEXICO

State carnivals adopting coral reefs as a central theme

COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS, USA

Mural painting contest at high-traffic bus stops and parades with participants in "coral costumes"

FLORIDA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Music festival series called "Reef Fest"

For more information on how you can participate in IYOR 2008, visit www.iyor.org. A comprehensive list of activities for action on all levels, along with promotional and educational materials, should provide you with the resources you need to join this global effort of saving the world's coral reefs.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT CORAL REEFS

Even if you don't live near a reef, you can help protect coral reefs in the U.S.A. and around the world.

- **Educate yourself about coral reefs and the creatures they support.** How many different species live in reefs? What new medicines have been developed from reef organisms? Participate in training or educational programs that focus on reef ecology. When you further your own education, you can help others understand the fragility and value of the world's coral reefs.
- **Be a waste water crusader!** Make sure that sewage from your boat and home is correctly treated. Excess nutrients in waste water can negatively impact coral reef ecosystems.
- **Support organizations that protect coral reefs.** Many groups have coral reef programs, and your support will make a big difference.
- **Don't use chemically enhanced pesticides and fertilizers.** Although you may live thousands of miles from a coral reef ecosystem, these products end up in the watershed – the area that drains to a common waterway, such as a stream, lake, estuary, wetland, and ultimately, the ocean.
- **Volunteer for a reef cleanup.** You don't live near a coral reef? Then consider visiting a coral reef on your next vacation. Spend an afternoon enjoying the beauty of one of the world's treasures while helping to preserve it for future generations.
- **Be an informed consumer.** Only buy marine fish and other reef organisms when you know they have been collected in an ecologically sound manner. Ask store managers where the organisms come from and how they were collected. Does the country have a management plan to insure the harvest was legal and sustainable over time? For more information on how to find sustainably harvested reef fish, go to www.aquariumcouncil.org.
- **If you dive, don't touch!** Take only pictures and leave only bubbles. Keep your fins, gear, and hands away from the reef, as this contact can hurt you and will damage the delicate coral animals. Stay off the bottom because disturbed sediments can smother the corals.
- **Support reef-friendly businesses.** Ask what your dive shop, boating store, tour operator, hotel and other coastal businesses are doing to save coral reefs. This is especially important in coastal areas with reefs. Let them know you are an informed consumer and care about reefs.
- **Recycle.** This helps keep trash out of the oceans and also out of landfills where it can have an adverse impact on the water quality of our rivers and oceans.
- **Conserve water.** The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater eventually find their ways back into the oceans.
- **Become a volunteer monitor!** Participate in community coral reef monitoring programs. If you do not live near a coast, get involved in protecting your watershed.
- **Report dumping or other illegal activities.** Help be the eyes and ears of the reef! Your involvement can make a big difference.
- **Be a marine debris crusader!** In addition to picking up your own trash, carry away the trash that others have left behind. More than just an unsightly nuisance, beach litter poses a significant threat to the health and survival of marine organisms, which can swallow or get tangled in beverage containers, plastic bags, six-pack rings, and other debris.
- **Hire local guides when visiting coral reef ecosystems.** This will help you learn about local resources, and protect the future of the reef by supporting the local economy.
- **Don't anchor on the reef.** If you are boating near a coral reef, use mooring buoy systems when they are available.
- **Respect local guidelines when you visit a reef.** Help keep coral reefs healthy by respecting local customs, recommendations, and regulations. Ask local authorities or your dive shop how to be a reef-friendly tourist.
- **Stay informed.** Find out about existing and proposed laws, programs, and projects that could affect the world's coral reefs. Many Web sites provide information about coral reefs and what you can do to become involved.
- **Spread the word.** Remember your own excitement at learning the value and importance of coral reef ecosystems. Sharing this excitement gets everyone involved.

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Conservation Program (<http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>)



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF 2008

IYOR 2008 IS A WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF CORAL REEFS AND THREATS TO THEIR SUSTAINABILITY, AND TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT THEM. ALL INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS, GOVERNMENTS, SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE WELCOME AND ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN IYOR 2008.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT CORAL REEFS?

- Join IYOR 2008: organize and host events to raise awareness and funds for coral reef conservation or participate in an existing event
- Register your event: you are invited to register your own event at our web site (www.iyor.org)
- Learn about the threats to and the value of coral reefs, mangroves and sea grasses
- Encourage conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources (for ideas, see www.iyor.org).

... AND WHY?

Healthy coral reef habitats provide:

- Habitat: home to over 1 million diverse aquatic species, including thousands of fish species
- Income: billions of dollars and millions of jobs in over 90 countries around the world
- Food: for people living near coral reefs, especially on small islands
- Protection: a natural barrier protecting coastal cities, communities and beaches
- Medicine: the potential for treatments for many of the world's most prevalent and dangerous illnesses and diseases.



FOR INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.IYOR.ORG



WWW.ICRIFORUM.ORG



IYOR 2008 CORAL REEFS NEED OUR HELP

FEATURE **JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU, OCEAN EXPLORER AND ENVIRONMENTALIST**

I am extremely pleased to see that global attention will once again be focused on coral reefs. Through the hard work and dedication of International Coral Reef Initiative partners 2008 will be the second International Year of the Reef (IYOR). Although problems have mounted since 1997 when we launched the first International Year of the Reef, there is good news. We have a much clearer understanding of how reefs are being affected by climate change; ocean acidification is getting attention and was not even mentioned in 1997; we now have solid data that marine reserves and protected areas actually work; and the public is much more aware of the need to change unsustainable ways of living and doing business.

My personal perspective is based on having had the good fortune of traveling extensively and witnessing first hand many coral reefs around the world. I have seen the vital connections between the health of coral reefs and the quality of people's lives. Coral reefs themselves are interconnected on wide geographic scales with other marine ecosystems through fish and bird migrations, the dispersal and recruitment of fish and shellfish larvae, and through people as we travel to exploit or enjoy the reef's resources. I have also observed how deforestation, agricultural runoff, pollution, overfishing, and destructive fishing practices affect the vitality of coral reefs.

In spite of noble proclamations about protecting coral reefs, in every country I have visited I can cite examples of reefs severely over-exploited or stressed from human mismanagement. Deforestation, over-development and agriculture in the Caribbean have released nutrients and sediments that stress reefs. In Papua New Guinea I have seen reefs reduced to rubble from dynamite fishing, and local people missing limbs from premature explosions. In Haiti a ten-foot-high wall of conch shells, called the pink cliffs, extends along a coastline for almost a mile. Fishermen now lament the collapse of their fishery and believe the conch population has moved, denying that over-harvest is the cause.

The over-harvest of fish throughout the Caribbean has upset ecological balances affecting entire reef ecosystems. On some of Florida's reefs there has been a 62 percent reduction of living coral cover from 1996 to 1998. Causes of these declines are complex but cumulative because everything is connected. As with our bodies, once our general state of health is undermined, we are vulnerable to a host of maladies.

The most devastated reefs I have ever witnessed surround the tiny country of Nauru, which has had one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Mining, and the resultant destruction of over 80 percent of the landscape, provided money but eliminated natural resources, the heritage for future generations. Young people with whom I have spoken have no need or incentive to work, and told me that their greatest wish would be to be able to dive and enjoy healthy and productive coral reefs.

In my opinion, the common denominator in these examples of mismanagement is a lack of understanding about coral reefs, how they function, their value to humans, why they are vulnerable to human impact, and how they can be managed sustainably. Education at every level - from international to national, from university to village children, and every level in between - is absolutely critical in protecting coral reefs. I am pleased to see that IYOR 2008 is tackling this important issue.

We at Ocean Futures Society totally support IYOR 2008 and share its goals of raising public awareness about the critical state of coral reefs and promoting sustainable management of reefs. For me this is a people issue; it will be people who will make the difference in the survival or loss of coral reefs. We must all work together to insure that our grandchildren have the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from these marvelous wonders of nature.

Read on and learn more about coral reefs.

Jean Michel Cousteau

IYOR 2008
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF

For more information about Ocean Futures Society, please visit:
www.oceanfutures.org

For more information about the International Year of the Reef,
please visit: **www.iyor.org**

EDA MEETS WITH ICRAN FOR IYOR 2008

FEATURE **LEENA AL ABBAS – EDA CRAMP & IYOR 2008 COORDINATOR**

Ten years ago, 1997 was declared by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), as the International Year of the Reef (IYOR). ICRI, which was founded in 1995, is a unique environmental partnership among governments, international organisations, and non-government organisations, which strives to preserve and reverse the degradation of the world's coral reefs and related ecosystems, by promoting their sustainable use and conservation for future generations.

Since its founding in 1995, ICRI has recognised a number of operational networks to assist in achieving their Framework of Action. These networks include: Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO); Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (CGRMN) and the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN).

The first IYOR campaign was initiated in response to the increasing threats and loss of coral reefs and associated ecosystems. IYOR 97 was a global effort to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and support conservation, research and management efforts. IYOR 97 proved to be very successful, with over 225 organisations in 50 countries and territories participating, over 700 articles published, hundreds of scientific surveys undertaken, as well as numerous local and global organisations dedicated to coral reef conservation.



However, coral reefs are continuing to decline throughout the world and global estimations indicate that a much greater percentage of coral reefs is under serious threat. Damaged or destroyed reefs can be found in more than 93 countries. Coral reefs are damaged as a result of over fishing, destructive fishing methods, unsustainable tourism, coastal development, pollution and climate change. Sadly, if this is allowed to continue, this decline is likely to lead to the loss of most of the world's reef resources during the next century.

Recognising that 10 years after IYOR 97, there continues to be an urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and to further conserve and manage the valuable coral reefs and associated ecosystems, ICRI designated 2008 as the 'International Year of the Reef' (IYOR 2008), which will be a worldwide campaign to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and threats to their sustainability, and to motivate people to take action to protect them. All individuals, corporations, Governments, schools and organisations are encouraged to participate in IYOR 2008.

EDA, for many years has been involved with various initiatives to protect the marine life and coral reefs across the UAE. In 2006, the Coral Reef Awareness and Monitoring Programme (CRAMP) was set up with the involvement of EDA members to assist with surveying coral reefs in selected areas across the UAE. Some of the activities organised by EDA to support CRAMP include clean-ups, releasing of mooring buoys, coordinating lectures by specialists, talking to schools and many more other initiatives.

In order to kick off the action plan for proposed IYOR 2008 activities, an EDA delegation represented by Ibrahim Al Zu'bi – Director & Environmental Advisor; Ernst Van Der Poll – EDA CRAMP Advisor & PADI Course Director at the Pavillion Dive Centre; and Leena Al Abbas – CRAMP Coordinator, have recently visited the ICRAN head office in Cambridge – UK to meet with ICRAN representatives. The meeting's objective was to introduce EDA's current portfolio of activities, discuss potential synergies with the ICRAN Programme, confirm IYOR 2008 events and obtain the necessary information, guidelines and material to ensure the success of IYOR 2008 activities in the UAE.

The meeting was extremely beneficial for both parties to learn more about each others' activities, and more so for EDA in gaining access to a wealth of information and advice on best practices on successful initiatives that can be adapted in the UAE.

"I am very excited to start working closely with ICRAN in order to launch various initiatives in celebration of IYOR 2008, and look forward to 2008 being a very busy year with lots of EDA activities and the involvement of all EDA members and volunteers", said Ibrahim Al Zu'bi.



Ibrahim, Leena, Ernst, Zahore El Kharousey (UNEP Chevening Scholar, UNEP-WCMC), Terri Young (ICRAN Asst Programme Officer, UNEP-WCMC IYOR 2008 Coordinator), Nicola Barnard (ICRAN Senior Programme Officer).

PROPOSED EDA ACTIVITIES FOR IYOR 2008

- Promotion of IYOR 2008 in the EDA booth in the Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX) 2008
- Promotion of IYOR 2008 in the EDA website
- Production of IYOR 2008 merchandise
- Inclusion of coral-related articles in all 4 issues of the EDA newsletter in 2008
- Promotion of the responsible tourism guidelines among UAE tourists through the EDA registered dive centers
- Coral reef awareness presentations to schools
- Publication of printed materials (posters, stickers, etc.) about coral reef awareness/ IYOR 2008
- Presentations from coral reef experts to EDA members
- Production of an official "State of the reefs status report" by the end of 2008

Note: These are some of the various activities lined up for the year. EDA will present the final list at the formal launching of IYOR 2008 in January next year.

For more information please visit the following sites:

IYOR 2008

International Year of the Reef

www.iyor.org

ICRI

International Coral Reef Initiative

www.icriforum.org

ICRAN

International Coral Reef Action Network

www.icran.org

THE ENVIROFONE CAMPAIGN

Did you know that one mobile phone battery can pollute 600,000 litres of drinking water? It is estimated that up to ten million mobile phones are hidden away in drawers when they could be recycled, with their harmful chemicals removed and the plastics being reused.

Thanks to Envirofone, disposing of old or damaged mobile phones in the UAE is now easy, rewarding, environmentally friendly, and gives charity a boost.

The national Envirofone campaign, set up to protect the environment from contaminated and harmful toxins found in mobile phones and accessories, was recently launched under the patronage of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). It has already established around 300 drop boxes across the UAE in a major effort to promote the safe disposal of the so-called 'e-waste'.

The campaign was inspired by the UAE National Strategy on environmental initiatives, as outlined by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. It was developed by EnviroFone in collaboration with the UAE Ministry of Environment & Water, telecommunications companies Etisalat and du, and the charity Gulf for Good.

"Mobile phones contain beryllium, cadmium, lithium, mercury and silver, and there's even a little bit of gold in there," said Stuart Fleming, Managing Director of EnviroFone. "And of course, there's the plastic."

Finding a safe way to dispose of this kind of e-waste is becoming paramount as the number of mobile phone users continues to rise as it is now often more economical to buy a new phone than repair an old one.

"As a direct result, these potentially hazardous objects get thrown in the bin and ultimately end up as landfill," says Fleming. "If this happens, water seeps through the landfill, and the noxious chemicals end up in our water systems, which means that we could effectively be drinking those types of toxins."

"Alarming, the process of using chlorine and cleaning out the water just doesn't remove all those harmful contaminants. It's a worrying thought, but now all mobile phone users in the UAE have a chance to prevent damage being done."

The national campaign to stop contaminated and harmful toxins in mobile phones and accessories from damaging the environment is just the first phase of a broad campaign to turn the UAE "green".

"We began with mobile phones because this was a good place to start to change people's mindset in the UAE about the environment and recycling," said Fleming.

"There is still a lot of work to be done, and the best place to start was with something that everybody knows, and everybody uses. But soon we'll be embarking on laptops, PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant) and computers."

Ninety per cent of a mobile phone is recyclable. Rather than ending up in the ground, causing damage to the environment and polluting water supplies, the elements are all put to good use, while the plastic is used to make road traffic cones or car bumpers.

The campaign has prevented thousands of unwanted mobile phones being dumped carelessly. To date, more than 100,000 phones have been deposited by the UAE public but there is still a lot of work and awareness required to reach the target of 250,000 handsets by the end of the year.

Support for the campaign has come from a variety of sources, including UAE motor sport icon Mohammed Ben Sulayem. The 14 times Middle East rally champion and President of the Emirates Automobile Touring Club (EATC), is making environment protection a priority for events organised or overseen by the EATC. Sulayem, who is passionate about protecting the environment, said, "There is so much happening these days which has an impact on the desert environment. We must do all we can to protect such beautiful landscapes and I am pleased to offer my support to EnviroFone."

"I know thousands of people have already dropped off mobile phones they don't need, and I'm going to be asking any of my friends or family who haven't already done the same to get moving."

The drop boxes are located at ENOC petrol stations in Dubai, all ADNOC petrol stations in Abu Dhabi and the Northern Emirates, Etisalat and du business centres, Al Rostamani currency exchange houses, Spinneys supermarkets, Magrudy's Book Stores, Lamcy Plaza, Deira City Centre, Ajman City Centre, Sharjah City Centre, Mall of the Emirates and FedEx locations in the UAE.

Those disposing of their unwanted mobile phones in the drop boxes earn instant rewards such as money off Etisalat or du bills or pre-paid cards. They also go into a raffle for monthly prizes of flights to London, and thousands of Air Miles which can be redeemed for a wide variety of rewards.

For every phone collected, 5 dirhams will be donated to Gulf for Good, the UAE-based charity that organises adventure challenges to raise funds for carefully selected needy causes.

"The campaign is a winner all round, allowing the public to do their bit to protect the environment, and in the process, earn rewards while also giving a helping hand to a very worthwhile charity," said Fleming.

EnviroServe, the parent company of EnviroFone, is known as The Green Company and has been pioneering environmental initiatives in the UAE for many years as a successful public private partnership.



A mountain of old phones for recycling



Stuart Fleming at one of the Envirofone drop boxes



BANYAN TREE GROUP

MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Tourism and environmental protection can go hand in hand, as the experience of hotel and spa operator, Banyan Tree Group, shows.

The group, which operates 17 resorts, 48 spas and 52 retail outlets in 19 countries worldwide, runs a number of award-winning research and conservation initiatives in the Maldives.

The group has two properties in the Maldives, the Banyan Tree Maldives Vabbinfaru and Angsana Maldives Ihuru. Environmental initiatives are funded through the Green Imperative Fund (GIF), which was established in November 2001. Guests at the two hotels can make donations to the fund with the proceeds matched dollar for dollar by the hotel group.

In February 2004, a Marine Biology Lab was set up on the Island of Vabbinfaru. The first of its kind to be funded and built by a private resort, the lab is supervised by an in-house marine biology team headed by director of conservation, Abdul Azeez Abdul Hakeem.

Hakeem, who was conferred the Presidential Award in 2001 for his dedication to the Maldivian environment, currently oversees conservation, research and community outreach projects.

CORAL REGENERATION

The Maldives' pristine coral reefs are one of the major attractions for tourists visiting the area, so understandably, a lot of work goes to ensure that the reefs remain healthy. Scientists focus on coral spawning and coral transplantation. For the first time in Maldives, Banyan Tree and Angsana witnessed and recorded the spawning of Acropora corals in 2003. These are believed to be the first of a new generation that arrived on the reef after the coral-bleaching calamity in Maldives in 1998 and is an indication that the new generation of corals has reached maturity.

For coral transplantation, naturally broken pieces of live corals are regularly transplanted onto the resorts' house reefs and will continue to grow and flourish in their new habitats.

Back in 1996, the group also implemented a reef rejuvenation project, using a scientific method known as 'marine accretion' to accelerate coral growth. A man-made steel structure in the form of a giant barnacle was submerged in the sea. Powered by solar cells, the structure produces a safe low-voltage current that reacts with seawater, causing minerals to crystallize into limestone that provides the ideal foundation for corals to flourish. The Barnacle Project received international recognition when it was



BANYAN TREE
HOTELS
AND RESORTS



ANGSANA
Resorts & Spa

conferred the "Theodore M Sperry Award" by the Society for Ecological Restoration.

Based on the same concept, the Lotus Project was launched in 2001. This time, scientists experimented with the shape of a lotus to maximise the submerged structure's surface area and allow sufficient sunlight to stream in and promote coral growth. Today, the Lotus is home to a diverse population of marine life, including corals from the Acropora, Montipora, Astreopora and Pocillopora genera.

TURTLE CONSERVATION

In addition to ensuring the health of coral populations, the group's scientists are also working to ensure the abundance of marine creatures such as green sea turtles. The Green Sea Turtles Research and Conservation Project has, to date, released over 600 baby turtles into the waters around the two islands. In the last two years, turtles which are being released are fitted with satellite transponders each costing US\$ 12,000. This now allows scientists to determine the turtles' migration patterns via the use of a satellite tracking system.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES

Some of the environmental challenges faced by the two islands do not have their origins in the Maldives and have to do with global developments. Due to rising sea levels, several beaches are slowly being eroded away. To prevent further erosion, both resorts invested US\$ 50,000 on eco-friendly sandbags, which are transferred by hand from one side of the island to another, twice a year in response to seasonal currents.

The marine lab team is also involved in the scientific study of black-tip sharks and dolphins. The Black-Tip Reef Shark Research Project,

which focuses on the life history, growth and communication patterns of these fantastic species, is developed in collaboration with the Canadian ReefQuest Centre for Shark Research.

The Dolphin Research Project, which studies the mammals' communication patterns, was developed in collaboration with Dr. Lindsay Porter, a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) marine specialist.

In addition to supporting environmental causes, the Banyan Tree Group also runs programmes designed to improve welfare across the Maldives. The fund supports the Jamaluddin School for Hearing Impaired Kids, which is the only school providing education for hearing-impaired children in the Maldives. The group also provides funding for a number of environment clubs in local schools and sponsors excursions to both resorts so that children can observe the importance of environmental conservation.



Turtle feeding



View of dolphins from boat

BLUE VENTURES

FEATURE **KAREN FOERSTEL, BLUE VENTURES COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**
PHOTOGRAPHY **BLUE VENTURES**

BlueVentures is an award-winning conservation group that leads diving expeditions to Madagascar's South Western coastal areas, training volunteers in scientific research, community outreach and on-the-ground conservation.

The coral reefs around Madagascar are some of the most biologically diverse yet least explored marine systems on Earth. Scientists say the 6,000 marine species currently known to live off the shores of this island nation represent only a small fraction of the underwater diversity yet to be explored here.

These habitats not only host a vast array of marine species, but are also the lifeline of coastal communities in Madagascar. The Vezo people, who live along the southwest coast of Madagascar, are known as "the people of the sea" for their reliance on marine resources for their food, transport and income. So strong is this relationship that the Vezo's cultural identity is closely related to the ocean waters.



For example, the Vezo regularly hold traditional ceremonies, called 'fombas', designed as a thank-you to their ancestral spirits for the bounty that the sea provides.

Unfortunately, as is the case in many other parts of the world, this way of life is threatened by growing coastal populations, expanding commercial fishing and global warming.

An award-winning conservation group, Blue Ventures, however, is hoping it can help manage these challenges. Blue Ventures leads diving expeditions to Madagascar's South Western coastal areas, training volunteers in scientific research, community outreach and on-the-ground conservation.

The waters of this region are home to the third largest continuous coral reef system in the world. Extending for more than 300 kilometres, the reef is home for a variety of sea creatures. Endangered marine turtles, migrating hump back whales, spinner dolphins and more than 500 species of tropical fish and corals are just some of the species found in the region.

Through daily dives, volunteers collect biological data on coral and other marine species and monitor the success of conservation projects in coordination with Blue Ventures scientists and community leaders. Volunteers frequently dive through coral reef areas that have never



ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

been explored before and regularly encounter manta rays, flying fish, moray eels and sea turtles during their underwater excursions.

Volunteers who join the expeditions come from all over the world and from all walks of life. Both experienced and first-time divers are welcome, with Blue Ventures offering SCUBA training and certification on site. Expedition teams live and work alongside villagers, with the opportunity to take lessons in the local language or to teach English to local school children.

Along with daily dives, volunteers can join other conservation projects such as monitoring local bird populations or surveying legendary baobab forests with trees often reaching 1,000 years of age and growing to more than ten metres in diameter.

Expeditions last for six weeks, but volunteers can arrange to stay for as little as three weeks or for as long as six months. Volunteers are required to pay between GBP 1,147 (Dhs 8,617) and GBP 3,115 (Dhs 23,402) to join the expeditions, depending on the duration of their stay.

In 2004, Blue Ventures partnered with the village of Andavadoaka to create the world's first community-run marine protected area for octopus – the village's primary economic resource. The area implemented seasonal fishing closures that allowed octopus to grow in size and number. The strategy not only ensures the long-term survival of octopus, but results in greater yields for local fishermen when the closures are reopened each season. The project proved so successful the government of Madagascar in 2005 used the project as a model to create similar protected areas across the country.

Blue Ventures is now partnering with 24 neighbouring villages to create a vast network of protected areas that will span 700-square kilometres and protect coral reefs, mangroves, sea grass beds and other threatened habitats. Along with the creation of protected areas, Blue Ventures is also working to develop sustainable livelihoods – including ecotourism and mariculture businesses such as algae and sea cucumber farming – to provide economic alternatives to destructive fishing practices.

Blue Ventures has won national and international recognition for its work in Madagascar. In 2005, Blue Ventures became the first European organisation to receive the SEED Award sponsored by the United Nations and the World Conservation Union to find the most innovative and entrepreneurial partnerships for sustainable development. In 2004 and 2006, Blue Ventures received "Highly

Commended" honours from the Responsible Tourism Awards. In 2006, Skal, the world's largest organisation of travel and tourism professionals, named Blue Ventures winner of its International Ecotourism Award.

In 2007, Andavadoaka village won the prestigious Equator Prize from the United Nations for its work with Blue Ventures and other conservation groups to create sustainable development projects that benefit both people and nature.

For more information on how you can join a Blue Ventures expedition, visit:
www.blueventures.org



A local villager fishing for octopus



Villagers with their traditional boats called Pirogues



An aerial shot of the Blue Ventures site

THE BUSINESS OF BEAUTIFUL DIVES

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE UNITED NATIONS NEWSLETTER
"BUSINESS.2010 - SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY" AND BEAUTIFUL OCEANS



"Why is your company's headquarter located up north in Montreal, Canada, if its main product lies between 23° 26' E 22' north and 23° 26' E 22' south of the Equator?"... is the question I hear when telling the Beautiful Oceans story. I answer that coral reefs are important not only to people living in the tropical belt. People from all corners of the world travel to tropical destinations such as the Caribbean, the Pacific or the Red Sea to take breaks from their busy lives so as to enjoy the turquoise colours of coral reef formations.

For us, being close to customers from the North provides us with a better understanding of travellers' needs and what they are looking for in terms of 'travel experience' - and that comes in handy to a company offering a range of ecotourism products focusing on the enjoyment of coral reefs.

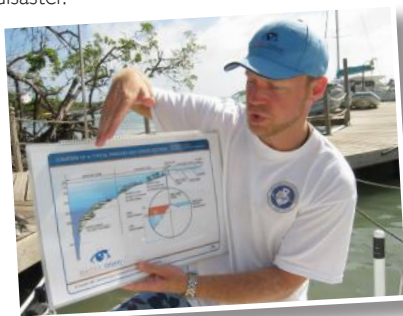
HARD CURRENCIES FOR CONSERVATION

My passion for diving and personal commitment to conservation triggered a career change in 2001 when I left the world of marketing and enrolled myself for a diploma in environmental studies. As Marine Expedition Leader at Coral Cay Conservation's flagship site in the Philippines, I spent every day of 6 months with ecotourists who invested a significant

amount of their free time, and hard currency, in hands-on coral reef conservation projects. I realized that there was a significant market opportunity and decided to set up a for-profit marine conservation organization. Beautiful Oceans was born.

Beautiful Oceans provides coral reef ecotours with a strong educational component in the form of marine biology courses. We provide high-level in-water fun for scuba divers, snorkelers and families while, at the same time, contributing to the conservation of coral reefs, through education and carbon-offset programmes.

For a company whose success depends on healthy coral reefs, anything that threatens the very resource it depends upon may spell disaster.



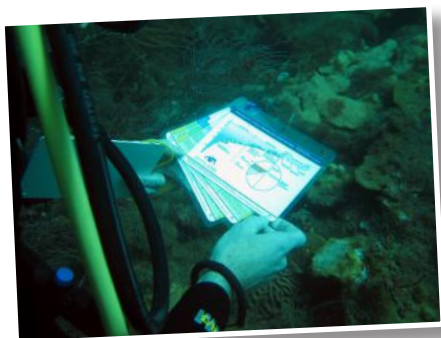
Science Instructor

Scientific surveys suggest that 20% of the reefs on Earth have been destroyed in the past few decades, while another 50% are in bad shape or verging on collapse. Our clients want to 'live' the corals before they become too distant, too fragile or perhaps stringently regulated as to visitor numbers. Climate change is one of our main causes of concern. Increases in sea surface temperatures and changes in water chemistry can cause large-scale coral bleaching, increasing the likelihood of coral death.

For a company like Beautiful Oceans, these trends are worrisome. Healthy coral reefs are, literally, the lifeblood of our organization. In fact, a large portion of the entire tourism industry operating in or around the tropical belt depends on healthy coral reefs and the diversity of organisms that can be found there. In light of this, wouldn't it make perfect business sense for all organizations depending, to some extent, on coral reefs to take care of the very resource they draw their income from?

INSPIRING PEOPLE

Our coral reef biology courses have been written to inspire people and to provide information that can easily be applied in-water. Our 'citizen marine biology' courses take great care in providing for more in-water fun to make people appreciate the beauty of



Diving with course dive slates

coral reefs while providing an understanding of the importance of our natural world and the diversity of its living organisms. In teaching about the importance of coral reef biodiversity, knowledge transforms into respect for and, ultimately, a desire to protect marine and coastal ecosystems. Through our courses, we try to transform scuba divers and snorkelers into environmental stewards, true citizens of Planet Earth. Our corporate philosophy is partly based on this ideal, framed by Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum: "In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand only what we are taught".

On each of our eco-diving and eco-snorkeling adventures, we encourage members of the local community or environmentalists to present their local cultural or environmental heritage. Sometimes, this translates into inviting guest speakers to talk about local efforts in terms of marine conservation or science highlights about reef-related environmental topics.

In an effort to make our local business partners 'walk the talk', we select resort operators that contribute in a meaningful manner to the local social infrastructure, the local preservation of the environment – or both. Beautiful Oceans is also part of 1% For The Planet [1], an association of businesses that adopt a principle of voluntary donations to the environment. In fact, we donate either 1% of our annual income or 10% of our profits, whichever is greater, to projects in the field of coral reef conservation.

SMELLING CO₂

Our company is also part of the Biodiversity and Tourism Network, a web-based platform established to foster dialogue between tourism practitioners and disseminate support for the implementation of the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development [2].

Although local initiatives are incredibly important to reverse the spiraling effect of decreasing coral reef biodiversity, each company can also contribute to global efforts to fight global warming. Beautiful Oceans is taking part in the Diving Carbon Offset Program developed by US-based not for profit organization Sustainable Travel International, in collaboration with Caribbean



dive operators [3]. This programme allows us to offset the impact each of our customers will have in terms of CO₂ emissions. Our trips not only promise to be great fun for underwater photographers, divers, and snorkelers but also provide them the peace of mind as to their CO₂ footprint.

I believe that it will soon become the norm for ecotour operators to integrate carbon offset programmes into the price structure of their services – otherwise they will fail to be taken seriously by their customers.

Leaving a trail of greenhouse gases behind an eco-adventure tour just doesn't smell right! Beautiful Oceans takes the lead within the diving industry... and invites others to follow for the sake of this beautiful planet and the diversity of the species that our health, future, as well as our whole business model rely upon.



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[1] www.onepercentfortheplanet.com

[2] <http://tourism.biodiv.org>

[3] www.sustainabletravelinternational.org

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BEAUTIFUL OCEANS RESORT & DIVE CENTER PACKAGE 2008 HIGHLIGHTS

- The package has been designed to allow dive & snorkel businesses in the Caribbean to offer to their customers an innovative and fun way to explore coral reefs:
 - Underwater guided tours based on GPS referenced points of special interest on the reef
 - Custom-tailored dive and snorkel circuit maps, created in collaboration with the dive center, highlighting special features on local reefs
 - Development of co-branded behavior booklets and pocket dive slates for selected marine species
 - Co-branded coral reef biology overview programs applied under the supervision of dive professionals trained and certified as Science Instructors
 - Course materials for resale to the end customer consisting of: island overview maps with dive sites, coral reef maps containing a typical dive circuit, coral reef organism behavior and observation booklets, pocket dive slates for the application of knowledge in water, and state-of-the-art coral reef biology overview programs. All material has been developed based on the highest quality standards, while coral reef biology material is scientifically validated

DIVING DESTINATIONS

- Customers have several options for taking part in a Beautiful Oceans Coral Reef Biology Experience: (1) pre-booking of the program upon reservation, (2) enrolling in the program upon arrival at the local destination, or (3) buying selected 'coral reef creature discovery kits' at the local dive shop and independently applying the knowledge contained in the kits during dives and snorkels. Whatever option the customer chooses, the material has been designed to provide for a satisfying, new and educational coral reef exploration experience that can be enjoyed by divers and snorkelers of all ages
- While the program is accessible to kids as young as 10 years old, it is designed to interest even the most experienced divers and snorkelers with previous knowledge of marine biology: "This new venture provides a good introduction to coral reefs... I certainly learned things from it, and I've been diving for over 20 years, have a biology degree..." Jill Studholme, Editor, SCUBA News, Scubatravel.co.uk
- The program meets highest expectations from members of the dive industry: "I'm being absolutely honest in saying that I've never been more impressed with a training program to come out of the diving community." Dr. Alex Brylske; Senior Editor, Dive Training Magazine at DEMA, November 2007
- Beautiful Oceans members adhere to a strict policy of sound environmental practices: Certified Science Instructors inform their customers about 'best diving & snorkeling practices' on the coral reef and apply these practices during all in-water activities
- Beautiful Oceans donates 1% of its annual pre-tax revenue – or 10% of its profits (whichever is the greatest) – to local non-profit organizations involved in coral reef conservation and education. This self-imposed policy ensures that a sizable portion of the revenue generated through the sale of the program goes back to the protection of the very resource divers and snorkelers set out to explore

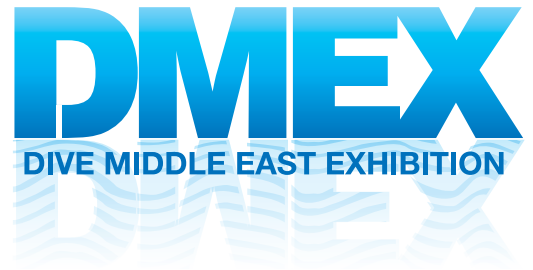


OUTLOOK

- Pre-launch of Resort Package : DEMA 2007, Orlando (exclusively Caribbean)
- Official launch of Resort Package: DEMA 2008, Las Vegas (Caribbean & Indian Ocean - Golden Triangle: Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines)
- Throughout 2008: GPS reef mapping currently conducted on over 30 coral reefs for resorts situated in the Bahamas and Turks & Caicos, while mapping projects for other Caribbean islands are currently in discussion

Please go to this link for the TV News article about Beautiful Oceans:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cq7zEMAvlrk>





THE DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION 2008



11 – 15 March 2008
Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi

To book your stand or for more information please contact:

DMEX Team

Dubai World Trade Center.
P O Box 9292, Dubai, UAE.
Tel: + 971 4 308 6451
Fax: + 971 4 318 8607
Email: boatshow@dwtc.com
www.boatshowdubai.com
www.emiratesdiving.com

Held alongside the Dubai International Boat Show (DIBS), the Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX) will run from 11 - 15 March 2008 at the Dubai International Marine Club – Mina Seyahi. The synergy of DIBS and DMEX for both exhibitors and visitors alike, makes this a natural meeting point for all those with an interest in the diving sector.

Offering a unique platform to showcase the very latest in diving equipment, supplies, services and techniques, DMEX has something for everyone, from exciting educational activities aimed at children to new diving pursuits for the enthusiastic leisure divers.

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MALAYSIA

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

FEATURE **DAVID EATON** PHOTOGRAPHY **DAVID EATON/BORNEO DIVERS**



One of the orangutans at the Sepilok Rehabilitation Centre



A proboscis monkey we saw during the river cruise

WetDigital.com (that's Robbie Ahlgren and I) attended a DEMA party and luckily won a free trip to Mabul Island, off the coast of Borneo. After months of planning, we traveled to Malaysia for our diving destination – Borneo Divers Resort on the island of Mabul.

The original dive resort on Sipadan Island, Borneo Divers has now moved to the island of Mabul, a 20-30 minute boat ride from the original site on Sipadan. All of the resorts on Sipadan have been closed, and no one is allowed on the island after 6:00 pm. It is a great spot for diving, and a most excellent surface interval.

The photo opportunities for the Borneo/Malaysia adventure were simply awesome. In a span of 15 days, we took over 1700 photographs, majority of which were underwater images. All of our underwater photos were taken near Mabul, Sipadan and Kapalai islands.

The diving in this area is a magical blend of the exquisite macro creatures, such as a wide variety of nudibranchs, pipe fish and pygmy seahorses, mixed with a wide array of pelagic species like schooling barracuda and big-eyed jacks. It was, at times, simply overwhelming. A lifetime would not suffice to examine each and every ecosystem that is present on these reefs.

Even the names speak of the exotic nature of this region – Sipadan, Mabul, Mamutik, Kapalai.... This entire region is rated as one of

the top diving destinations in the world, and for good reason.

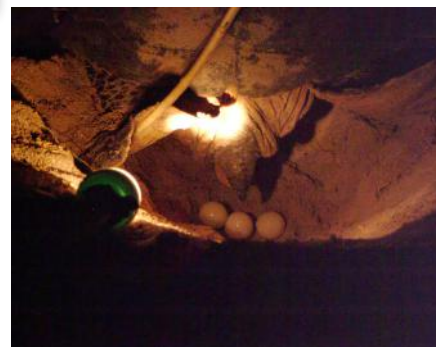
We were on Mabul Island for a total of 8 days, with 5 full days of diving. We went on 16 dives, for a total of 701 minutes underwater; an experience that I or Robbie will never forget.

After Mabul Island, our next stop was Turtle Island, located off the coast of Sabah, out from Sandakan. We took a short boat ride back to Semporna, drove back to Tawau, and then flew to Sandakan where we stayed the night at a really nice place, Hotel Sabah.

Turtle Island is the only island that can be visited by tourists although there are two others in the turtle preserve. Both the green and the hawksbill turtles nest on the island. The park rangers collect the eggs every night from the laying turtles, and move them inland to a protected hatching area. The new hatchlings are released at night to avoid the daytime predators, such as birds. This effort must be paying off because the number of turtles around the dive sites is extraordinary.

Due to a low tide and full moon, we waited till almost midnight to see the nesting "mama" turtle. There were 11 other turtles that nested and over 1000 eggs were collected. Our turtle laid 103. We also got the chance of releasing some baby turtles that night.

After Turtle Island, we were taken by a water taxi back to Sandakan for a quick breakfast. Afterwards, we went on a river cruise up the



The "mama" turtle laying eggs



The hatching area for the turtle eggs



The night's first hatchling



DIVING DESTINATIONS

Kinabatangan River, the third longest river in Borneo with a length of 560 kilometers. The river travels directly into the heartland of Borneo and is a bird and wildlife paradise, with very few villages. We saw scores of proboscis monkeys, long-tailed macaques, and the best treat of all, the Borneo pygmy elephant.

One of the truly unique animals associated with the island of Borneo is the orangutan. This great ape is only found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. Sadly, like many of the great apes, their numbers are dwindling due to poaching and loss of habitat. The Sepilok Rehabilitation Center, outside of Sandakan, hosts a large number of orangutans in the process of being reintroduced into the wild, once self-sufficient.

After a nice evening and an early morning cruise back to Sandakan, we again stayed the night at Hotel Sabah and caught a flight back to Kota Kinabalu, to start the long journey home.

After we returned from Malaysia, we realized just how much we had missed – those things that we had not seen – but nonetheless, we were thrilled with those sights we had experienced. Someday we will return; Malaysia beckons each day that we think back on the trip.



Blue Ring Octopus by Eric Madeja

David Eaton, together with friend and partner Robbie Ahlgren, runs a digital photography and video services.

For more information, go to:
www.wetdigital.com

To watch their Borneo diving videos, go to the following links:

<http://www.stage6.com/user/robbieahlgren/video/1909269/Christmas-on-the-Reef---Emmanuel>

and

<http://www.stage6.com/user/robbieahlgren/video/1909352/Christmas-on-the-Reef---Hear?>



For more information on Borneo Divers, go to: **www.borneodivers.info**



Bumphead Fish by Eric Madeja



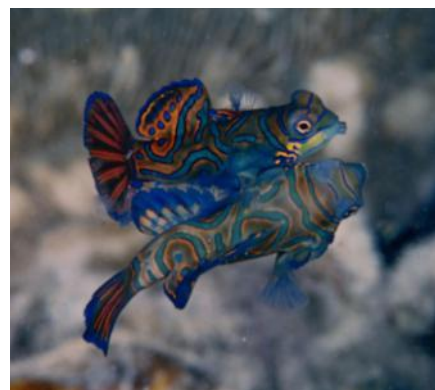
Jack Fish by Eric Madeja



Barracuda by Eric Madeja



Flamboyant Cuttlefish by Eric Madeja



Mandarin Fish by Eric Madeja



Green Turtle by Eric Madeja



Leaf Fish by Eric Madeja



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AN AQUATIC PARADISE



Swimming with a Sea Lion – SATC

With its unique marine life and exceptional underwater scenery, South Australia is undoubtedly a diver's paradise. Its clean, uncrowded, temperate waters are among the most biologically diverse in the world with more than 370 species of fish, 80 percent of which occur only in South Australia. There are also plenty of sites for both experienced divers and beginners.

Here is a sampling of the diving that can be done in the regions:

THE FLEURIEU PENINSULA

Fleurieu Reef in the Fleurieu Peninsula is the jewel in South Australia's diving crown. It features the wreck of the decommissioned naval destroyer, the ex-HMAS Hobart. The majority of the ship remains fully intact and accessible to divers, including the engine room, missile launchers and gun turrets.

The peninsula is also home to the famous Leafy or Weedy Sea Dragons, unique to the waters of Southern Australia. Other marine life found in the waters includes Cuttlefish, Blue Devils, Old Wives, Zebra Fish, and majestic Rays.

In winter, Southern Right Whales can be seen migrating along the Peninsula's coastline, particularly in Encounter Bay between June and September.

THE EYRE PENINSULA

A spectacular event that occurs nowhere else

in the world happens in Whyalla in the Eyre Peninsula. Each year from May and August, thousands of giant cuttlefish congregate to breed at the reef areas around Black Point and Point Lowly. They are attracted to this area, as they need a hard rocky surface on to which to attach their eggs. The low rocky reef areas at Black Point and Point Lowly are the only locations of their type on either side of the Upper Spencer Gulf. The event has been recognised by Australian and international scientists as one of the most significant and amazing, naturally occurring events in Australian marine waters.

The coastline is also home to many Australian sea lion colonies. At Baird Bay, under the supervision of experienced guides, it's possible to swim with sea lions in their own underwater playground.

Eyre Peninsula also has a collection of unspoilt islands and reefs on the far west coast called Nuyts Archipelago. The low flat islands extend underwater to shallow rocks covered with diverse and abundant marine flora and fauna and many small caves containing an exciting array of soft corals and gorgonians. The islands are home to a world of marine life including Blue Devilfish, Harlequin Fish, Sweep, Southern Rock Lobster, Abalone, Blue Groper and Bottlenose Dolphins.

However, the ultimate underwater thrill on Eyre Peninsula is a cage dive with the Great

White Sharks in the blue waters of Port Lincoln.

YORK PENINSULA

Troubridge Shoals-Investigator Strait is part of the passage of water between Kangaroo Island and the Yorke Peninsula. The shoals hug the Yorke Peninsula and have been the official cause of at least 35 wrecks and countless groundings. The reefs surrounding Troubridge Island, part of the Shoals, are home to six of the region's earliest sailing vessels (from 1838-1873). Troubridge Shoals are also home for magnificent giant spider crabs that claw their way over reefs covered in sponges. As they occasionally present treacherous conditions, the shoals are recommended for experienced divers only.

Novice shipwreck divers can also explore Wardang Island with its nine wrecks. It is also home to an array of marine life including Port Jackson Sharks, Wobbegongs and Cuttlefish, Sweep, Bullseyes and Dusky Morwong.

ADELAIDE

Adelaide boasts of its Underwater Heritage Trail on Gulf St. Vincent which links four of the most famous wrecks: the Grecian, the Zanon, Star of Greece and Norma. These wrecks sank between 1841 and 1893.

Different pods of Bottle-nosed Dolphins can also be seen welcoming visitors in the waters at Glenelg and Port Adelaide River. ►

DIVING DESTINATIONS

KANGAROO ISLAND

The underwater life in Kangaroo Island is vivid. Its unpolluted waters teem with fish such as the Blue Devil, Harlequin, Truncate Coral fish, and the elusive Leafy Sea Dragon.

At Seal Bay, sea lions spend their days fishing and returning to sun themselves on the sand, ignoring the curious visitors who come to photograph them.

There are also more than 60 shipwrecks scattered around the island, many of them lying just off the beaches.

LIMESTONE COAST - CAVE DIVING

Piccaninnie Ponds is one of the prettiest and most spectacular underwater sites in Australia. Divers from far and wide travel to explore this unbelievable groundwater-fed spring, which has been filtering through the limestone, and forming the ponds' features over thousands of years. Explore The Chasm, with its white walls covered in delicate green algal growth contrasting with the dark depths below, and The Cathedral, a large underwater cavern with its majestic white walls of sculptured and scalloped limestone. The water here is almost always crystal clear with a glorious blue hinge and visibility can exceed 40 metres. Snorkelling and diving are allowed by permit. The ponds also conceal extensive cave passages that can be explored by cave divers.

Nearby, Ewens Ponds is a unique spring fed system. It's fed mainly by underwater springs that can be seen bubbling up on the bottom of the three ponds. The clarity of the water enables plants to grow underwater to a depth of six metres. A current will carry you along the top of the channel where you can float past dense stands of plants while coming face to face with a variety of fish. The tiny, rare Ewens Pygmy Perch is found hiding in the cover of the reeds in these channels. At night or on a cloudy day, freshwater crayfish are seen scuttling along the pond's floor scavenging for food. Also found are eels and galaxids.



Diving with Leafy Seadragons – SATC

For full information regarding snorkelling and diving in the ponds, including permit requirements please visit:

www.parks.sa.gov.au

The Cave Divers Association of Australia also contains a wealth of information at: www.cavedivers.com.au

For more information on diving in South Australia, visit:

<http://www.dive-southaustralia.com/DivingSouthAustralia.aspx>

Or contact:

ANDREW OLDFIELD

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– Gulf Countries

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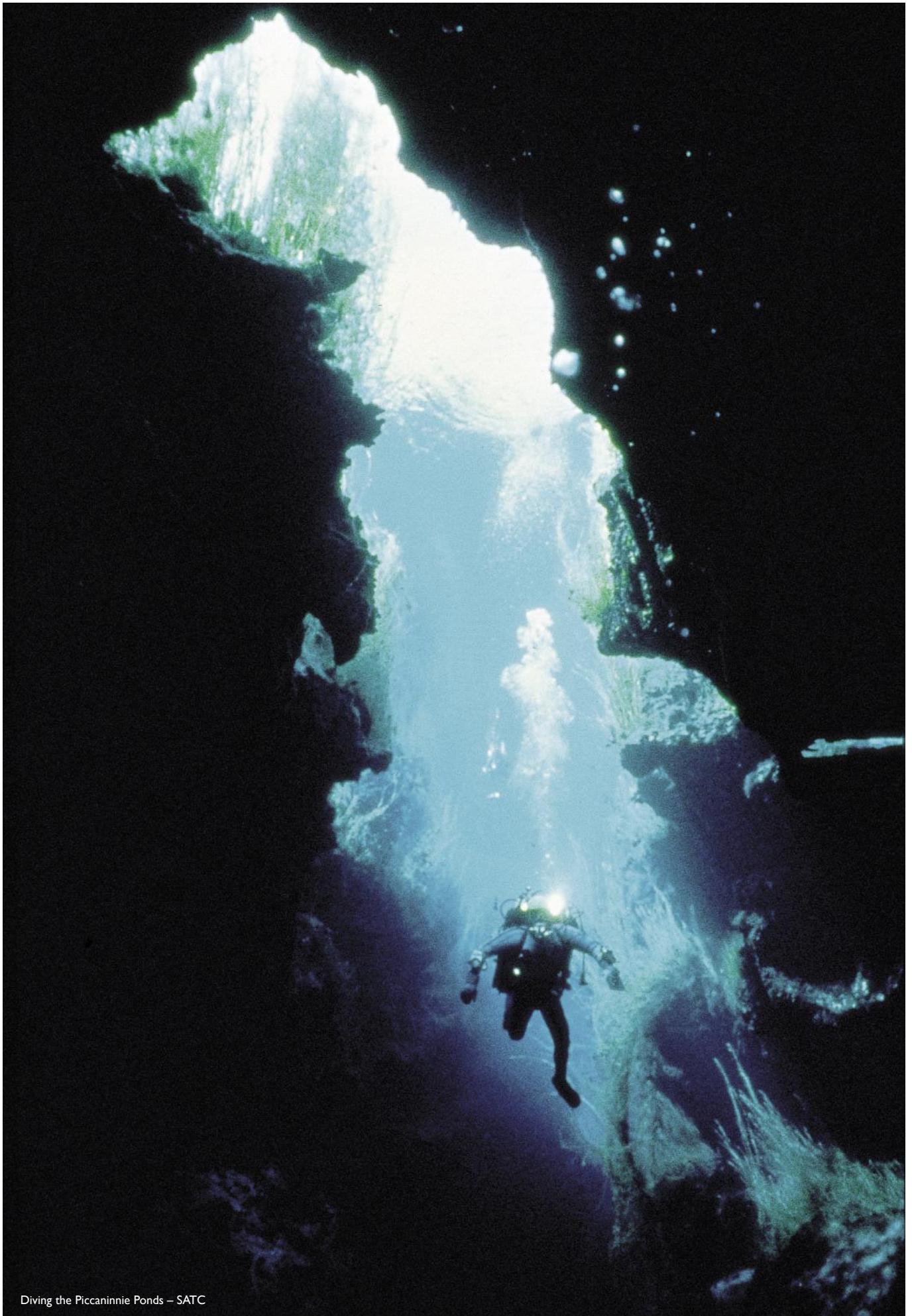
Email: tourism.australia@eim.ae

Website: www.tourism.australia.com



Swimming with Sea Lions – SATC





Diving the Piccaninnie Ponds – SATC

DIVE GALAPAGOS

FEATURE **VANESSA BARKER** PHOTOGRAPHY **WIKIPEDIA**



Sea Lion Pup

A few weeks ago, I spent an amazing weekend in Jordan being a complete tourist. I did it all, from rubbing Dead Sea mud all over me to proudly re-enacting Indiana Jones in Petra, much to the dismay of my husband!

Petra was an unbelievable experience, until I stood still for a few minutes and really looked around me. You name the nationality and there he was, complete with sun hat, backpack and camera! There must have been thousands of tourists all around me that suddenly, Petra didn't feel quite so special anymore. Maybe we picked the wrong time to be there (I am!) or maybe now that it has become one of the New 7 Wonders of the World, it's only to be expected. Whatever the reason, I know I walked away from Petra craving a destination that's still unexplored - where my husband and a Lonely Planet book could be my only companions!

There are so few such places left and they're disappearing fast. Every rock seems to have its own Tourism Board now, all reeling in the mass crowds!

What I'm sure many of us crave is a holiday where we can dive and explore totally new and out-of-this-world surroundings; where our minds can be blown away at every corner. Above all, we crave a place that is still relatively unexplored and peaceful.

So what destination, you may ask, can tick off all those boxes? Out of the few left to be discovered, the most mystical has to be the Enchanted Islands, better known to us as The Galapagos Islands.

This archipelago of 13 major volcanic islands along with its many islets and rocks, lie 965km west of South America and is a province of Ecuador, forming part of Ecuador's National Park System. Believe it or not, people actually live on some of these islands, no matter how remote they may seem. The Galapagos population currently sits at 30,000,

spreading out on 5 of the islands. Spanish is the predominant language.

The Galapagos is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has fascinated visitors since its most famous guest landed on its shores in 1845 - Mr. Charles Darwin. This is where he laid the foundation for his Theory of Evolution. From that day on, the islands' rich fauna and flora excited all who have had the chance to visit it. And there are very few so far, who have made this trip. This is a once in a lifetime holiday so it will cost a bit but the experience is worth every penny you spend.

There are so many unique species roaming the Galapagos, from marine and land iguanas, seals, frigates, penguins, giant tortoises to the ever popular Blue-footed Boobies; it's hard to know where to look at next.

Even more exciting is its underwater world. These waters have been voted one of the 7 Underwater Wonders of the World by CEDAM (Conservation, Education, Diving, Awareness and Marine-Research) International. And no wonder; for where else can you dive with equatorial penguins, playful sea lion pups, spotted rays, marine iguanas, friendly dolphins, turtles, whale sharks and even timid sharks altogether and so close to shore?

It is estimated that one of every four marine species you see during your dives in the Galapagos are endemic so it's definitely a must-do in this lifetime!

Since I've never dived in the Galapagos, I thought that I'd check out what real, experienced divers had to say about these

waters. So I went onto www.realtravel.com and spent hours browsing through some of the luckiest travelers' blogs.

Words cannot describe the envy I felt when I saw all the pictures and read the stories. To have dived with dozens of hammerheads and actually played with sea lion pups is incredible!

There are about 30 dive sites to choose from and it will amaze you as all are so private, pristine and relatively unexplored. It is said that Galapagos is a destination with surprises around every corner - you never know what the wildlife will do next.

On the down side, the waters are freezing and a 7mm wet suit, complete with hood and gloves, is a definite must. During the hot season (December to April), the surface temperatures range from 22-26 degrees Celsius whereas during the dry season (May-November), these will drop to 18-22 degrees Celsius. So wrap up!

There were also a lot of comments made about the low visibility at times and the strong and unpredictable currents so unfortunately, there's no way a first time diver could attempt these waters. The Galapagos diving has been rated as one of the world's 10 most difficult recreational dives but nonetheless, it is still regarded as one of the most worthwhile trips you'll ever make.

There are several experienced dive operators to look after you while you are there but it is important to do your research on them all to make sure you will be in safe hands. It is also important to note that as of August 2007, the



Blue Footed Booby courtship display

Galapagos National Parks Director cancelled quite a few of the live-aboard licenses so make sure the ones you pick are legal. You may also consider a land-based dive operator so you will have time to explore the shores when you're not diving.

Getting to these islands from Dubai has just been made easier with Emirates' direct flights to Sao Paolo. From there, you can connect to Ecuador; spend some time exploring this Latin American destination, and then head across for a few nights to explore the wonders of the Galapagos.

So far, only one travel operator in Dubai offers holiday packages to these islands.

Contact Tempo Holidays on: 04 341 6764 and speak to Dean Hopkins. Let him know that you're an EDA member and quote your EDA membership number to avail of special deals.

Tempo currently has 5/6 night offers for exploring these islands. It won't include any dives but will cover everything from accommodation in hotels and a cruise ship, meals, transfers and guides, and Dean will be able to recommend a couple of dive operators for you to contact.

I probably won't be able to head out there until I've secured a few more dives and saved some serious cash, but visiting the Galapagos Islands is definitely on my list of "100 Things to do before I die". If you can, make sure you tick it off now.

For more information on these islands, visit:

www.vivecuador.com
www.ecuadorexplorer.com
www.galapagosislands.com
www.galapagoscubadiving.com
www.cedam.org

DID YOU KNOW?

The islands are located at the Galápagos hotspot, a place where the earth's crust is being melted from below by a mantle plume, creating volcanoes. The oldest island is thought to have formed between 5 and 10 million years ago. The youngest islands, Isabela and Fernandina, are still being formed, with the most recent volcanic eruption in 2007.



Marine Iguanas

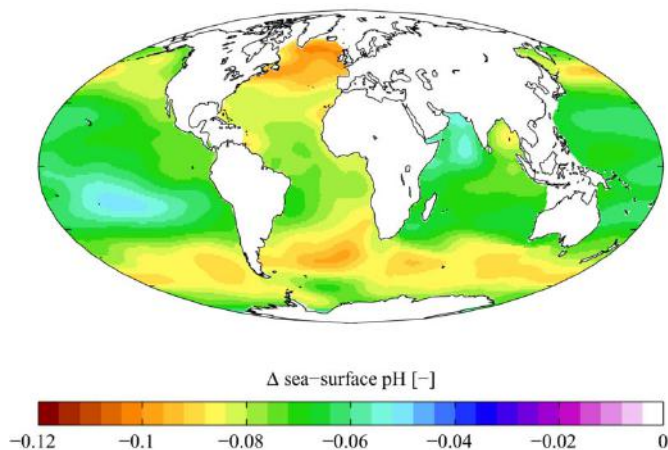
OCEAN ACIDIFICATION, THE OTHER THREAT OF RISING CO₂ EMISSIONS

FEATURE **CRYSTAL DAVIS** (TEXT REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM EARTH TRENDS WWW.EARTHTRENDS.ORG)

Fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes release over six billion metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere each year. The consequences of these greenhouse gas emissions are often discussed in terms of rising global temperatures, but global warming is not the only threat from increased atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂). Ocean acidification, which occurs when CO₂ in the atmosphere reacts with water to create carbonic acid, has already increased ocean acidity by 30 percent (Doney, 2006). Although the chemistry of this effect is well understood and not much debated, the full consequences of ocean acidification for marine ecosystems and human well-being are only beginning to be revealed.

Figure 1: Changes in Sea-Surface pH from Anthropogenic CO₂ Emissions (pre-industrial to 1990s)

Note: Lower pH indicates greater acidity (see Box 1: Understanding the pH Scale)

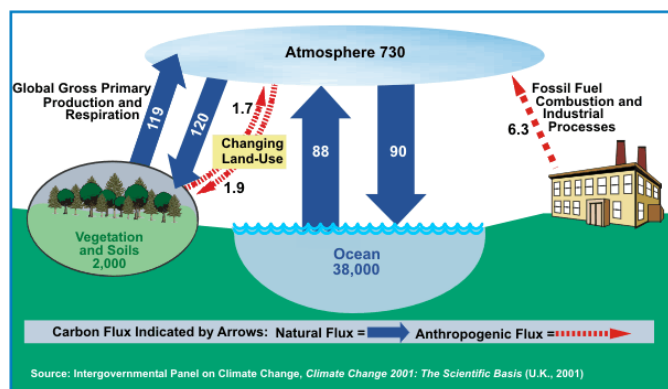


Source: Pacific Science Association, 2007

OCEANS AND THE GLOBAL CARBON CYCLE

The ocean plays a critical role in the global carbon cycle: the amount of carbon stored in the ocean is roughly 50 times greater than that in the atmosphere (see Figure 2). At the surface, the ocean interacts constantly with the atmosphere to absorb and release carbon dioxide. Once absorbed, a carbon atom will remain in the ocean for hundreds of years, circulating from the ocean's surface to its depths and back to the surface again. A small amount of this absorbed carbon will descend to the ocean floor in the form of dead marine organisms, where it is then trapped within deep ocean sediments. Overall, the ocean acts as a carbon sink, with a net intake of approximately two billion metric tons of carbon per year, equivalent to one-third of annual anthropogenic emissions (Royal Society, 2005).

Figure 2: Annual Carbon Flows and Storage (billion metric tons)



Source: NOAA Earth System Research Laboratory, 2007

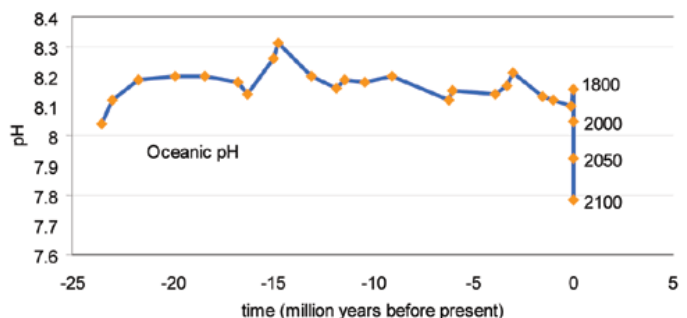
CO₂ EMISSIONS AND OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

With the rise of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations from the pre-industrial level of 280 parts per million to 379 parts per million in 2005 (IPCC, 2007), the amount of carbon in the ocean has increased substantially and rapidly. Global data collected over several decades indicate that the oceans have absorbed at least half of the anthropogenic CO₂ emissions that have occurred since 1750 (Sabine et al., 2004). This carbon dioxide has combined with water to form carbonic acid, which, like all acids, releases hydrogen ions (H⁺) into solution, making ocean surface water 30 percent more acidic on average. Depending on the extent of future CO₂ emissions and other factors, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) predicts that ocean acidity could increase by 150 percent by 2100 (see Figure 3).

BOX 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PH SCALE

The pH scale, ranging from zero to 14, is used by scientists to measure the acidity or alkalinity (a.k.a. basicity) of a solution, which is determined by the concentration of hydrogen ions, where more H⁺ indicates greater acidity. Solutions with a value of seven are considered neutral (such as pure water), with lower values being more acidic and higher values being more alkaline. The pH of pristine seawater ranges between 8 and 8.3, indicating that the ocean is naturally somewhat alkaline, although deeper and colder water tends to be more acidic. Due to the nature of the pH scale, a 30 percent increase in ocean acidity corresponds to a decrease of only 0.1 pH units.

Figure 3: Past and Projected Oceanic pH Levels



Source: EUR-OCEANS, 2007

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON MARINE ORGANISMS

A 150 percent increase in ocean acidity would be undetectable to the average human, but certain marine organisms including mollusks, crustaceans, reef-forming corals and some species of algae and phytoplankton are particularly vulnerable to small changes in pH. These species, known as "marine calcifiers," all create skeletons or shells out of calcium carbonate. The essential building block for this process is the carbonate ion, but when combined with hydrogen ions released by carbonic acid, it is rendered useless for shell-building organisms. The concentration of carbonate ions is expected to decline by half during this century due to increased atmospheric carbon dioxide levels (Orr et al., 2005).

Marine calcifiers face a second challenge: their calcium carbonate shells dissolve in environments that are too acidic. In fact, some deep, cold ocean waters are naturally too acidic for marine calcifiers to survive, meaning that these organisms only exist above a certain depth known as the "saturation horizon." With ocean acidification, the saturation

horizon is expected to shift closer to the surface by 50 to 200 meters relative to its position during the 1800s (Doney, 2006). The Southern and Arctic oceans, which are colder and therefore naturally more acidic, may become entirely inhospitable for organisms with shells made from aragonite – one of the weaker mineral forms of calcium carbonate – by the end of this century (EUR-OCEANS, 2007).

Potential impacts on harvested species like fishes and squids are more uncertain. One area of concern is acidosis, or the build-up of carbonic acid in body fluids, which can disrupt growth, respiration and reproduction. An indirect but perhaps more certain consequence is that many species will suffer from the loss of marine calcifiers, which provide essential food and habitat (including coral reefs) for countless ocean dwellers.

UNCERTAINTIES HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Scientists are still unclear about the full consequences of ocean acidification. Several lab studies that have investigated the effects of increased acidity on marine calcifiers have found concerning results, but theories regarding impacts at the ecosystem level remain speculative. Effects on human well-being, both through lost fisheries and recreational potential, are also unknown.

Despite our lack of knowledge, the trend of ocean acidification is undeniably concerning, especially considering the devastating consequences that acid rain had on fresh water ecosystems during the 20th century. Furthermore, the ocean is currently undergoing other potentially dangerous changes, including warming, sea level rise, pollution and overfishing. The rapid pace at which these changes are occurring, and the fact that they are happening simultaneously, threatens to disrupt the ocean's well-balanced physical, chemical and biological processes faster than they can adapt.

Once the ocean's pH has been lowered, it will take thousands of years to reverse. Thus, reducing carbon dioxide emissions will be critical to minimizing future ocean acidification. Even if emissions are reduced, however, the ocean will inevitably continue to undergo significant human-induced changes throughout this century. To prepare for these changes, we will need scientific research to enhance our knowledge of complex ocean processes and ecosystem interactions. Furthermore, ocean resource and fisheries managers, with the support of improved scientific understanding, must be alert to early warning signs of ecosystem decline and take precautionary measures to protect vulnerable species.

World Resources Institute. 2007. EarthTrends: Environmental Information. Available at <http://earthtrends.wri.org>. Washington DC: World Resources Institute.



FEATURED CREATURE

FEATURE **JESTIN JOS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **PHILIPPE LECOMTE**

Starting this issue, EDA will feature interesting underwater creatures that are found in the UAE waters. EDA accepts text and photo contributions for this page.

FAST FACTS

- Pretty and delicate-looking but venomous; punctures from its spines can cause extreme pain but rarely fatal (First aid treatment - wash wound in hot water then seek medical attention)
- Average lifespan is 15 years
- Solitary
- Hunts actively at night and eats small fish, crabs, prawns and shrimps
- When threatened, the lionfish turns its body sideways and prepared to deliver a painful jab from its spines

FUN FACTS

- A lazy fish, it rarely moves when it's not feeding
- Male and female look the same except during courtship and spawning; male becomes darker while the female develops a swollen tummy
- A hardy species, not prone to disease
- A big eater
- Sometimes hang upside down when resting in crevices or a rock
- From time to time, they shed off the outer layer of their skin to get rid of parasites and algae that attach to their bodies



CLEAN UP DIBBA

PHOTOGRAPHY ALLY LANDES



After concentrating on years of clean up efforts on the East Coast's relatively clean dive sites, EDA, with much help from the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre, decided on holding the main event of Clean Up Arabia at Dibba Port in Fujairah.

Nearly 300 volunteers showed up to clean the underwater and breakwater areas of the port which measured around three square kilometers. EDA's Board Members also graced the event with their presence, lending support to the 12th anniversary of the clean up campaign.

The activity kicked off with the awarding of the Appreciation Trophy to EDA from Kuwait Oil Company. KOC was represented by Tariq Faylkawi while Essa Al Ghurair, EDA Vice Chairman, accepted the award on EDA's behalf.

The clean up began with the dispatch of around 100 divers in 12 boats to the inner and outer areas of the port. This was followed by the team division of the land-based participants before they headed toward the breakwater areas assigned to them. A surprise for the day was the participation of a furry friend, "Lucy", who also donned her own Clean Up Arabia T-shirt and helped her owners clean up the beach area of the port.

After three hours, the main collection point for all of the trash turned into a small mountain load of garbage filled with around 200 bags full of the usual food and beverage-related waste, numerous pallets and wood splinters, loads of thick and heavy ropes, several tires and the strangest item to be found in a port – a mattress.

The participants then proceeded to the park beside the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre to enjoy the catered lunch prepared for them. Everyone called it a day after that, except for some EDA volunteers who helped in the trash count.

All in all, it was another Clean Up Arabia to remember, as most participants expressed the desire to come back and clean the area one more time, despite the lack of facilities in the port. This was a contrast to the previous clean ups as people came out satisfied with what they did. This just goes to show that there are still people who are willing to forsake comfort just to do their share to help the environment. And we are very glad to know that they are EDA members!

EDA is grateful for the participation of the following: Majid Al Futtam, Sama Dubai, Halcrow, Starbucks, Tatweer, Filipino Scuba Divers Club (FSDC), the Sharjah Wanderers Dive Club (SWDC) and all EDA members.

EDA would also like to thank the following for their great support: Qasim Barwani and Ali Danhany of the Dibba Marine Research Environment Centre, Ministry of Environment & Water, Dibba Municipality, Dibba Police, Dibba Hospital, Dibba Port, Fishermen Cooperative Society, Public Works and Agriculture, Al Boom Al Aqah, Freestyle Divers, Sandy Beach Diving Centre, Nizar Fakhoury (Clean Up Arabia Coordinator) and Jasmine Pasibe (Clean Up Deputy Coordinator).

Clean Up Arabia Coordinator:

Nizar Fakhoury

Email: c/o projects@emiratesdiving.com



وزارة البيئة و المياه
دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة



Sama Dubai

A member of DUBAI HOLDING

SAMA DUBAI JOINS CLEAN UP ARABIA FOR THE FIRST TIME

Sama Dubai employees and their families gathered at Dibba Ports in Fujairah to participate in the 12th annual Clean up Arabia.

Antoaneta Popova, Sama Dubai Senior Manager CSR expressed: "Sama Dubai volunteers clearly showed their passion towards creating a clean environment; every little step counts! We are hopeful that next year we will see more participation by Sama Dubai colleagues."





CLEAN UP ABU DHABI

FEATURE **KATHLEEN RUSSELL, EDA ABU DHABI COMMITTEE COORDINATOR**
PHOTOGRAPHY **LIGHT CHASERS**



This year's Clean Up Arabia 2007, jointly organized by EDA and Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD), drew a large crowd of divers and beach volunteers in Abu Dhabi's Ras Al Akhdar clean up site. Over 250 enthusiastic volunteers armed themselves with clean up bags, gloves, hats and some with dive gear, and collected close to 5000 items in and around the coastal area. Everyone was there to "make a difference."

Diligent teams of divers came back with trash bags filled with plastic and glass bottles, tin cans, cutlery, ropes and even car parts while beach volunteers collected a huge amount of cigarette butts and beverage cans. The participants accumulated nearly a hundred bags of waste that weighed an estimated 650 kilos.

After the clean up, GASCO Diving Club brought some delicious catered food to feed the hungry volunteers, a fair award for the great effort of everyone.

The enthusiastic volunteers came from all walks of life. There were students from the American Community School (Girl Scout Troops from Grades 1-7) and Emirates National School; divers from Al Jazeera Diving Centre, ADMA Dive Club, ADCO Dive Club, GASCO Diving Club, TOTAL ABK, Frog Legs Scuba Divers and EDA; and participants from EAD, Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club, NMC Ambulance service, Al Masaoood Marine, Light Chasers photographers and Abu Dhabi Municipality.

Clean Up Coordinator: Ms. Kathleen Russell
Email: godive@emirates.net.ae





Note: EDA has been conducting Clean Up Arabia for 12 years now, tirelessly campaigning to raise awareness concerning the preservation of the UAE marine environment. It certainly warms our hearts to know that we have achieved that objective somehow, especially with impressionable young minds.

Here is a very nice "thank you" note from the Girl Scout troops to Ms. Kathleen Russell, our hardworking EDA Abu Dhabi coordinator, who made it all happen.

Dear Ms. Russell,

American Community School Girl Scout Brownie Troop 43 (the 3rd Graders) would like to thank you so much for enabling us to participate in Clean Up Arabia last Saturday. You worked very hard to make us feel an integral part of this event and I know the phenomenal amount of time and effort it must have been to include our group, especially on such short notice. The girls and I appreciated your effort so much, and we just wanted to let you know.

The girls were ecstatic over the T-shirts, hats, and lunch, but were most proud to show their parents the certificate of appreciation they earned by participating.

It was a wonderful event filled with important life lessons for my girls. They were appalled (or in their words, "grossed out") by the condition of the beach when they first arrived. While we picked up trash, we talked about respect for our environment, health and safety concerns of littering, why we should care, why we should recycle, and what we could do to make a difference on a daily basis. It reinforced our troop message for the outing, which was "Girl Scouts leave only footprints". It was great for them to see there are so many other people who care too. And the divers helped them understand that it is not only a land issue, but also a whole earth issue. Important lessons for 8 and 9 year old kids who are surrounded by nannies, maids, and armies of people who daily scrub their bedrooms, villas, schools and city for them.

Thank you again for your hard work, your support, your enthusiasm, and your kindness.

Best wishes,

Donna Bowen
Leader for ACS Girl Scout Brownie Troop 43





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Al Boom Diving **CLEAN UP DUBAI**

FEATURE **MARK VINCENT ISRAEL** PHOTOGRAPHY **AL BOOM DIVING**



After several years, Clean Up Arabia was finally conducted again in Dubai, thanks to the support of Al Boom Diving.

Despite the short notice and the bring-your-own-food and bring-your-own-gear policies, 83 volunteers, still showed up to help clean the Russian Beach in Jumeirah 1 and do their share of helping the environment. The participants were mostly Al Boom Diving Club members and students who came with their families, and some EDA members.

The clean up started at 2:00 PM and after two hours, the volunteers had collected 30 bags of trash composed mostly of beverage-related items (plastic & glass bottles, cans and caps), plastic bags and cigarette butts.

After the trash count, the volunteers headed back to Al Boom Diving where the Barbeque Party and certificate distribution was held.

Al Boom Diving would like to thank the Al Boom Diving Club members and non-profit Filipino diving clubs – Royal Scuba Divers International, headed by Genie King and Filipino Scuba Divers Club (FSDC) – for joining Clean Up Arabia in Dubai.

Clean Up Coordinator: Mark Vincent Israel,
 Al Boom Diving
Email: abdiving@emirates.net.ae
Website: www.alboomdiving.com



CLEAN UP RAS AL KHAIMAH

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **ARABIAN DIVER**



For the second time around, Ras Al khaimah participated in the annual Clean up Arabia event with great success. Volunteers joined forces with Arabian Diver in making a difference by collecting around 1000 kg of trash that has been washed up on shore or left behind by beach goers, along the shoreline of Al Hamra Marina.

From 9:00AM to 12:00PM on Saturday, the 10th of November, 41 volunteers from all ages – individuals, families, students and organizations, locals and foreigners alike helped Arabian Diver in making the Al Hamra Marina beach and shoreline a clean, beautiful and a safe area for visitors and marine animals.

The trash collected filled up 85 trash bags. 39% of the waste came from vessel operations and debris from fishing equipment (foam floats, fishing lines, lube and oil bottles, containers and rope), 36% were plastic beverage bottles while 22% were glass beverage bottles. The rest of the trash included clothing, cans and cardboard.

Although there is still a lot of trash to be removed around the Al Hamra Marina, we are firm believers in the collective power of concerned and aware individuals. For this, Arabian Diver would like to thank each one of the volunteers that made this community event a success, the Dubai Petroleum Company for their support, and the teachers and students of the Ras Al Khaimah English Speaking School (RAKES) whose enthusiasm and motivation inspired us even more.



Arabian Diver

Clean Up Coordinator: Mr. Adel Khatib, Arabian Diver

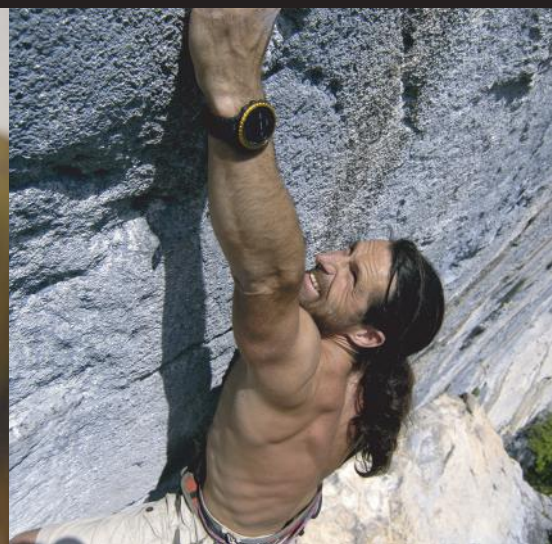
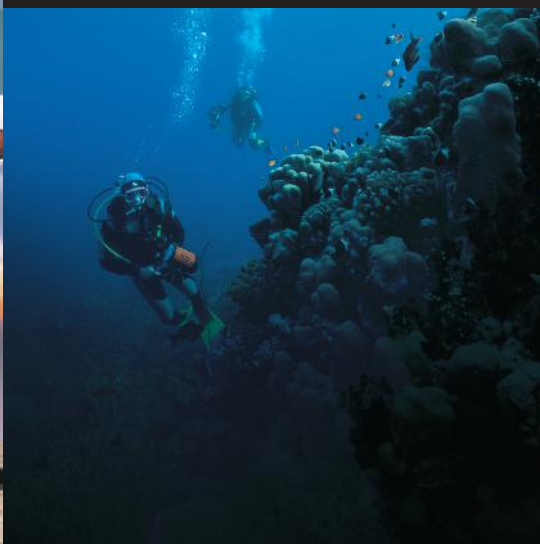
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- Speed distance with optional Suunto PODs
- Interference free digital transmission

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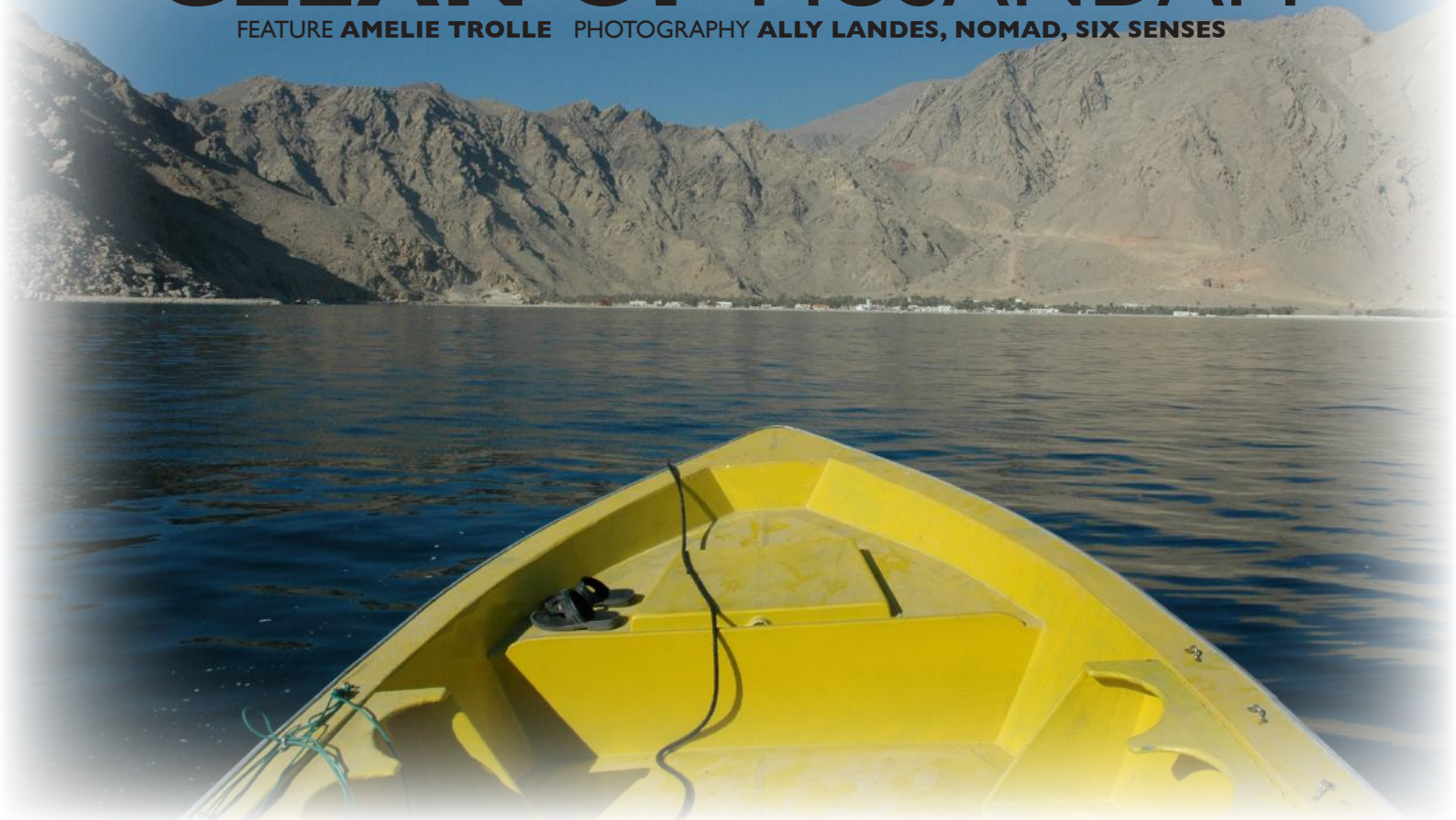
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DECEMBER 2007 EMIRATES DIVING ASSOCIATION 43

CLEAN UP

CLEAN UP MUSANDAM

FEATURE **AMELIE TROLLE** PHOTOGRAPHY **ALLY LANDES, NOMAD, SIX SENSES**



What a day! The Clean Up Arabia – Musandam was taken across the border to yet another GCC country, the Sultanate of Oman, and to our resort in the remote Ziggy Bay. It was a great honor for us to host the event in the Musandam region together with Al Marsa Musandam and Nomad Ocean Adventures. The event brought together volunteers from Six Senses, Al Marsa, Nomad and EDA, and also attracted representatives from the Omani Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs who came all the way from Khasab and Muscat to help out. We also had school children from Dibba, as well as the members of Ziggy village, the ones who share the beautiful Ziggy Bay with us.

It was a day of great fun with people who share our commitment to a better environment and with those who are just learning to care. Spreading environmental awareness and mixing people from different organizations were also key features of the day. Collaborating with

EDA in planning Clean Up Arabia-Musandam has been unique and we believe a solid basis for future cooperation has been established by this event.

On behalf of everybody at Six Senses Hideaway and Spa at Ziggy Bay, we wish to thank EDA and our partners in this event, Al Marsa Musandam and Nomad Ocean Adventures, as well as all participants for a great day out in the beautiful and slightly cleaner than before, Musandam, Sultanate of Oman!

The Six Senses Hideaway & Spa at Ziggy Bay features 82 pool villas and is scheduled to open in January 2008.

Part of Six Senses corporate responsibility is its Social and Environmental Responsibility Fund (SERF) which funds projects that contribute to sustainable development at a local, national and global scale. 0.5% of total revenue goes into the SERF fund.



NOMAD
OCEAN ADVENTURES



AL MARSA Musandam



SIX SENSES
HIDEAWAY
& SPA AT ZIGGY BAY

For more information regarding Six Senses' environmental work, contact Amelie Trolle, Environment & Social Responsibilities Officer: socialenvironment-ziggy@evasonhideaways.com

For reservations, email: reservations-ziggy@evasonhideaways.com

Clean Up Coordinators: Ms. Amelie Trolle (Six Senses Hideaway & Spa at Ziggy Bay),
Mr. Christophe Chellapermal (Nomad Ocean Adventures)

Emails: socialenvironment-ziggy@evasonhideaways.com, chris@discovernomad.com

Websites: www.evasonhideaways.com, www.discovernomad.com



CLEAN UP BAHRAIN

FEATURE ALAA TARIQ AHMED PHOTOGRAPHY BAHRAIN WOMEN'S SOCIETY



Our beaches play a crucial role in our lives. They are the only outdoors recreation opportunity in Bahrain, offer jobs for many locals, and most importantly, they keep us connected to our heritage. Despite previous efforts that have been made, the health and environmental conditions of many beaches continue to deteriorate. Therefore, the Bahrain Women's Society – Environmental Citizenship Program (BWS-ECP) decided to partner with EDA and bring Clean Up Arabia to the Kingdom of Bahrain for the second time.

The campaign, which was held at Al Budaya beach on the 10th of November 2007, was a major success that brought around 90 volunteers from all walks of life to participate in the Clean up. Interestingly, many volunteers came as families, emphasizing the concept that positive change had to begin at home. Children as young as four years old participated in the campaign. To keep them safe, BWS-ECP organized a little art booth, supervised and facilitated by a member, where the little ones did some art work, reflecting on what they saw.

The volunteers picked up various kinds of trash at the clean up area. They were surprised to see bizarre items such as toilet seats and alcohol bottles. Al Budaya beach went from a dumping ground to a clean beach after the participants filled up almost 200 garbage bags.

Clean up Arabia – Bahrain enjoyed the support of the amazing volunteers who made it all happen, the North municipality who provided us with all the equipment we needed and facilitated our work and Anis – Arabian Network Information Service – who not only funded the campaign in Bahrain but had their staff and top management actively participate in cleaning up the beach along with their children and spouses.

Clean Up Coordinator: Ms. Alaa Tariq Ahmed
Email: a_t_a@hotmail.com
Website: www.bahrainws.org



CLEAN UP QATAR

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CARREFOUR QATAR



MAF Carrefour Hypermarkets Qatar WLL, in partnership with EDA & Supreme Council of Environment and Natural Reserves (SCENR), cleaned up the Ras Al Nouf Beach in Al Khor on 10th November 2007. The clean up drive witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 150 Carrefour employees.

The employees collected over 2.5 tonnes of waste which included items such as broken glass, metal items with toxic chemicals, food containers, tyres, beverage bottles, cigarettes and cigarette filters, syringes, fishing traps etc.

Priding itself as an eco-friendly organization, Carrefour imposed the use of the Carrefour reusable bags during the clean up. Carrefour recently introduced these bags in a push to reduce the millions of plastic bags that pollute the Qatar's ecosystem every year. By using the bag four times, users will reduce plastic bag usage by 18 percent, thereby leading to

a reduction in greenhouse gas emission by 20 percent.

Christian De Nale, the District Manager of Carrefour, said, "Carrefour takes the lead in engaging itself in eco-friendly activities. Going by the sheer volume of waste that we collected, we know our concerns have been well placed. We hope that more organisations will take up this initiative to preserve the environment. We also appeal to the residents to be more aware of the damaging consequences of littering the beaches of Qatar and its long term impact on the ecological balance".



Clean Up Coordinator:

Mr. Christian De Nale, Carrefour Qatar

Email: CNale@mafcarefour.com

Website: www.carrefourqatar.com





CLEAN UP KUWAIT

FEATURE **AMEEN SULAIMAN**
PHOTOGRAPHY **KOC**



Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), represented by Export and Marine Operations (EMO) staff, participated in "Clean up Arabia" on the 8th of November 2007.

The campaign, led by Team Leader Marine Operations with the assistance of Team Leader – Marine Services and Team Leader – Health, Safety and Environment, was conducted under the supervision of Manager – EMO.

State bodies, like the Environment Public Authority (EPA) and the Ministry of Interior, as well as the Coast Guard, schools and the Special Needs School & Autism Centres also joined the clean up which was conducted in Mina Al-Ahmadi and Abu Halifa beaches. The participants collected almost 1 ton of marine debris.

The campaign was arranged by the KOC Dive Team which has been a strong supporter of EDA and its activities.

Clean Up Coordinator: Mohammad Al-Basry
Email: Mbasry@kockw.com
Website: www.kockw.com

CLEAN UP ARABIA

ITEMS COLLECTED	BEACH	UW	GROUP TOTALS
SHORELINE/RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES			
Bags	2811	240	3051
Balloons	11	1	12
Beverage bottles(plastics)	5942	337	6319
Beverage bottles (glass)	2225	275	2533
Beverage cans	2934	931	3977
Caps(lids)	3751	120	3885
Clothing	575	53	634
Cups, plates, forks, knives, spoons	1604	287	1925
Food wrapper,containers	2449	198	2671
Pull tabs	120	50	176
6-pack holders	87	0	87
Shotgun shells, wadding	48	1	49
Straws,stirrers	879	154	1051
Toys	109	3	112
OCEAN,WATERWAY ACTIVITIES			
Bait container, packing	66	19	87
Bleach, cleaner bottles	297	5	302
Bouys	592	1	593
Crabs, lobsters, fish traps	166	0	166
Crates	12	1	13
Fishing line	294	60	361
Fishing lures, light sticks	75	3	78
Fishing nets	90	22	126
Light bulbs, tubes	407	4	411
Oil, lube bottles	195	5	200
Pallets	42	3	45
Plastic sheeting, tarps	63	17	82
Rope	639	126	780
Strapping bands	19	18	39
SMOKING-RELATED ACTIVITIES			
Cigarettes, cigarette filters	5422	154	5576
Cigarette lighter	74	16	90
Cigar tips	40	57	97
Tobacco packaging, wrapper	149	37	186
DUMPING ACTIVITIES			
Appliance (refrigerators, washers, etc)	35	0	35
Batteries	67	0	67
Building materials	482	37	519
Cars, car parts	7	11	18
55 gal drum	14	0	14
Tires	29	18	47
MEDICAL, PERSONEL HYGIENE			
Condoms	44	7	51
Diapers	69	3	72
Syringes	21	0	21
Tampons, tampon applicators	8	0	8
TOTAL PER TEAM	32963	3274	36566

A 2007 AT A GLANCE



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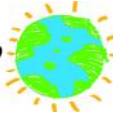
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DEBRIS ITEMS OF LOCAL CONCERN			
Wooden sticks	50	1	51
Syringes	12	0	12
Lightbulbs	16	0	16
Barbed wire	1	0	1
Football	1	0	1
Barbeque grills	3	0	3
Solar panels	0	1	1
Car exhaust pipes	0	1	1
ATM cards	1	0	1
Foam	4	0	4
Wood	90	0	90
Mattresses	1	0	1
Plastic handles	1	2	3
Total per team	180	5	185
GRAND TOTAL	33143	3279	36751
Number of volunteers	1146		
Number of bags of trash	1010		
Estimated Weight (kg)	8500		
Estimated Distance (m)	11705		

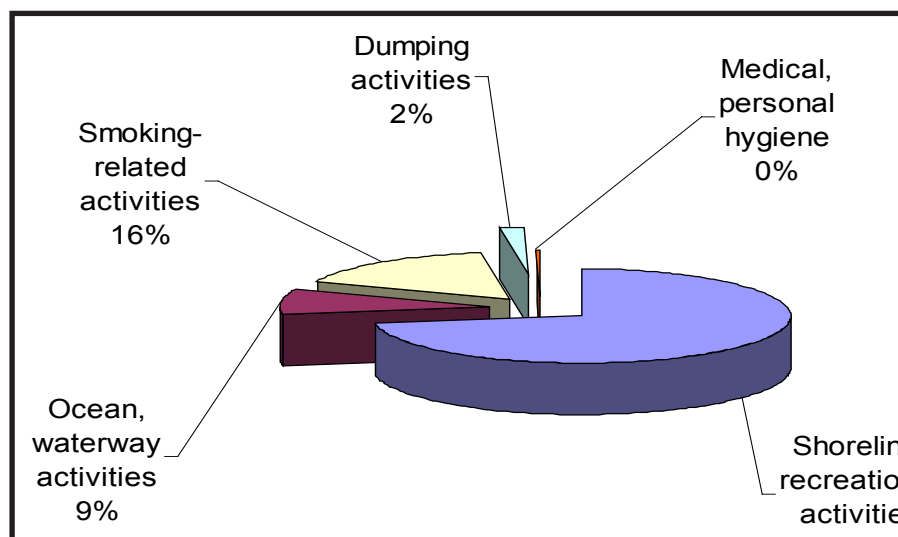
COVERAGE: 4 Emirates and 4 Countries

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 1,146

TOTAL NUMBER OF BAGS COLLECTED: 1,010

TOTAL TRASH WEIGHT: 8.5 Tonnes

TOTAL DISTANCE COVERED: 12 Kilometres



NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES

FEATURE **CHRISTOPHE CHELLAPERMAI** PHOTOGRAPHY **NOMAD OCEAN ADVENTURES**



You might have heard or seen our name but always wondered who we were or what we offered?

Dibba Bay, Musandam

WHO

My name is Christophe. I am French and I grew up in the U.A.E. I founded Nomad Ocean Adventures (NOA) three years ago, and in many ways it has become my adventure. In fact, it has become a great human adventure, because when one says the name 'Nomad Ocean Adventures', I see the faces of all the people that make Nomad what it is. I will never forget the smile of an old Omani near Khassab who received me as if I was part of his own family or the many Omani friends I have made during these last three years. These faces, remind me each and every time why I choose to stay in the Middle East. They also remind me of the reasons why I started this business and why it is important to preserve our planet so that future generations may have a chance of enjoying nature - as it is - not among skyscrapers and polluted cities.

WHY

In my life I have traveled quite a bit, met a lot of people and discovered many different cultures, each with its own perception of our world. This is why when I founded NOA, I did not just want to start a plain dull dive centre. I also created a guesthouse that offers a different service to what is generally proposed at five-star hotels. I wanted to create a place where divers would not just come to dive but also be given a gateway to the true Arabian heritage and warmth. Nomad Ocean Adventures is my way in which to propagate true values and is also a way to sustain the local economy and protect its natural resources.

I work closely with other Omani tour operators and want them to grow not just in size but also in efficiency. I want to help them to improve their safety measures and help them to provide better services. I want to share my knowledge and my passion for conservation of the ocean. It is irrelevant to me that tour operators may eventually become competitors. In the end, what really matters is that they pass on that knowledge and passion to others around them too.

WHAT

So you might still wonder what NOA offers? We offer you through our diving packages not just diving, but an opportunity to live an experience with us. You can share that great human adventure that is NOA or even help us make a difference. Our most popular package is the weekend package which includes one night dive, two boat dives, full dive gear, all meals and accommodation for half the price that you would normally spend in a five-star hotel or dive centre.

If you want to know more about our packages please check our website:
www.discovernomad.com

Or call: **+971(0)50 885 3238**
Or: **+968 9983 4256**

Or you may write to us at:
chris@discovernomad.com



Abdullah, Nomad's loyal and trusty boat driver



Mohamed Al Hambuzi and Mohamed Shaar – Two of the many Omani friends that Christophe treats as family



Christophe Chellapermai

EDA MEMBERS' 2007 DIVE EXPERIENCES

EDA would like to thank its members who took the time to write and share their dive experiences for the year.

DAVE CHRISTMAS EDA MEMBER #522



"We've seen some fantastic dives in 2007. Visibility has varied due to the massive construction on the East Coast but the wrecks further offshore have been accessible and provide great diving experiences.

The Mariam Express now has some lovely marine life, even though a few people continue to 'salvage' items, leaving less for the rest of us to experience. It is incredible that even close to shore, there are some signs of coral growth and a good range of fish coping with the additional short term silting. On the East Coast, the dives have been up to their usual high standards but the damage from Cyclone Gonu affected many sites. Dibba Rock, for example, has completely changed profile and we'll miss the large raspberry coral bed and the well-building Jawfish. Thankfully, the more southern sites appear to be recovering well. This is the way of the world and nature's way of renewing. When diving, there is always something new and interesting to see and places to explore – these changes add variety and make our sport so addictive!

I have seen the EDA and the diving industry taking a more active and public role in 2007. Conservation is beginning to be a topic of discussion in the UAE, and we need to 'play our part'. Let's continue to drive the key issues forward and protect this delicate and very important resource."

PAUL SANT EDA MEMBER #572



"2007 was once again a relatively safe and successful year for the diving industry in the UAE.

Customer growth has increased for us, as well as entry and specialty levels.

2008 will have a new set of issues with the amount of dive operations being allowed to open on the East coast, and the lack of diving sites to cater to so many operators. I foresee a lot of damage to sites, particularly the ones near Divers Down, due to overcrowding of divers and the lack of marine reserves being in the Sharjah area."

PIERRE VAN ZYL EDA MEMBER #871



"After almost giving up diving in South Africa 5 years ago (extreme cold waters, great whites, 0-1m visibility on a good day, among others), I got pushed into restarting my diving in Dubai, mid-2007.

What a pleasure! It's been fun, exciting and very interesting. The marine life, warm waters, various wreck dives and the Musandam adventures have made an average working 2007 into an adventure. Our group also joined the EDA and we did our first cleanup. It was great to be able to put something back into the environment which provides us with so much. I hope 2008 will continue on the same exciting pace and if EDA/AI Boom arranges more clean ups/dive trips, then we will be the first to sign up."

PHILLIPE LECOMTE EDA MEMBER #707



"This year, 2007, was important for me because I had dived more in the Arabian Gulf, Abu Dhabi coast, East coast and Khor Fakkan, even after the Cyclone Gonu. I've been in

the UAE since 2003 yet I find myself diving more frequently because I always find new species to see and observe.

For 2008, I plan to dive more often to increase my experience, have more fun, and take more pictures of all the species.

I'm a little scared about the future of diving in the UAE, especially on the East coast because the numbers of divers are increasing and we have to think about the conservation of underwater life. You have a lot of beautiful places and I think you must protect them better, even from the fishermen."

MA. LOURDES ARELLANO EDA MEMBER #889



"I arrived in the UAE in February 2007 and resumed my budding love affair with diving (I was certified in mid-2006) in June. Coming from a tropical region, I did not know what to

expect about diving in the Gulf. I was pleasantly surprised to discover interesting wrecks and beautiful schools of fish, have my first up close and personal encounter with a turtle, join a clean-up campaign and become a part of a very active dive community.

It was a year of many diving firsts for me, and I'm looking forward to more amazing experiences (and more new divers) in 2008!"

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Photograph Credits: Whale shark: Phillip Colla & Constanze; Justin Marshall

RITA BENTO

EDA'S NEW RESIDENT MARINE BIOLOGIST

FEATURE **RITA BENTO**

Rita diving in "Panela", a cave in São Miguel island, Azores – Nuno Sá



It was with great delight that I received the invitation of Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi to introduce myself to the diving community through this newsletter. I only met Ibrahim at the end of November, and right in our first meeting, we talked about several topics that are of concern to EDA, along with some ideas. Right away, we got along very well and we both felt that there is so much to do and that with the right group of people, we could accomplish them all.

I'm from Portugal and a graduate of Marine Biology. After finishing my degree in 2002, I have worked on diving issues and with marine mammals. In the last year of my

course, I did a practical training for one year in Bioacoustics with the theme "Acoustic monitorization of mysticetes seasonality in the Middle Atlantic Ridge". This was conducted in Hatfield Marine Science Centre in Oregon, USA, under the orientation of Cooperative Institute for Marine Resources Studies/ Oregon State University (CIMARS/OSU) and Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory/ National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (PMEL/NOAA). Thanks to this opportunity, I had the chance to participate in two scientific cruises, the "Seismic Investigation by Recording of Acoustic Waves in the North Atlantic" (SIRENA) from Azores to France, and the Hidromar cruise in the Atlantic Ocean.

The constant direct contact with the ocean made me addicted to it, and before getting a driving licence I was already taking my diving course. Since 1998, I have taken several specialized courses and at the moment, I'm a CMAS M1 Instructor. I've worked in a diving centre in the Azores Islands (Portugal) the past few years as a diving guide, assistant instructor and instructor. I've also dived a lot in recent years, mainly in Portugal (mainland and islands) and in the Red Sea, where I enjoyed its fantastic underwater world.

In the summer of 2006, my photographer colleague, Nuno Sá, and I created the first Portuguese diving guide, the "Azorean Diving Guide". For four months, we dived in the nine Azores islands, where I collected data (flora and fauna, general descriptions and geological

characteristics, among others) while Nuno took all the photographs for the book. It was the best diving time in my life, where I had the chance to be surrounded by large schools of barracudas, dived with twenty-six manta rays and admired for long periods of time the fascinating colours of nudibranchs.

At the moment, I'm finishing my Master's Degree in Marine Resources, and together with Ibrahim, made a research plan for my thesis. Next year, I will work with EDA as a Marine Biologist, help in the research issues and produce a UAE coral reef report that will be presented at the end of the International Year of the Reef (IYOR) 2008 celebration.

There are a vast number of problems in coral reef degradation and in Marine Protected Areas (MPA) that need to be carefully looked into, with several concerns that need constant monitoring and evaluation.

It is important to remember that the oceans, besides the several important roles that they play, are recognised, in a worldwide level, as an important supply of marine resources. Unfortunately, due to its dimension, it is also seen as inexhaustible. In the last decades, mankind has been confronted with some worrying environmental alterations. A protected area is an example of a conservation strategy, which can be used to manage natural resources. A research and monitorization conducted in an MPA, and the enveloping areas, present three main benefits: (1) a better understanding of



The front and back cover of the Azorean Diving Guide that Rita co-authored

NEW STAFF

the reserves, (2) a greater knowledge of the marine ecosystem complexity (like coral reefs) and (3) a development of the manager and evaluation methods. After the implementation of an MPA, it is necessary to conduct an environmental monitorization, in a way to evaluate the protection efficiency.

I hope that in the next year, we can work hard to protect what belongs to the UAE, this incredible long coast line that surrounds you. There are many new ideas that constantly pop into my head, several projects I would like to start with EDA. We can present some new diving spots; help members know the best way to identify the different marine species; make a general diving map, among other things. I hope that with these ideas, we can bring to all of you new diving experiences.

We will also be open to any ideas that the members may have. Please feel free to contact us, as we try to improve the protection of the UAE waters.

I'm looking forward to meeting you all, if possible, in your fantastic underwater world.



A sperm whale rubbing on the zodiac where Rita and Nuno were working, collecting data for the Azorean Diving Guide



Rita diving in the Azores with a Gray triggerfish trying to bite her mask



Rita and Nuno Sá after a dive, in a traditional Azorean fisherman-boat

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On behalf of the EDA Chairman, Board of Directors, staff and members, we gratefully acknowledge the support of our 2007 sponsors:

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Thank you for helping us in our mission to conserve and protect the UAE marine resources.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LAUNCHING INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF (IYOR) 2008

January 2008

DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION (DMEX)

11th – 15th March 2008, Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi

EARTH DAY

22nd April 2008

EDA GALA DINNER 2008

Date to be confirmed

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

5th June 2008



NOTICES

BEST WISHES



We would like to extend our best wishes to our hard-working secretary, Ms. Erna Magbanua, on her upcoming wedding to be held in her homeland, the Philippines.

At the same time, we wish her good luck in her future career endeavor as she leaves EDA after three years of loyal and dedicated service.

THANK YOU



We would like to dedicate this space to thank the most loyal and active member of EDA. A silent witness to all the happenings in association, he's none other than our very own Mehboob Sondag, who has been working for EDA for the past 11 years. He is always present in all activities, works silently in the background and lends his full support to all staff and members who need his help.

Thank you Mehboob, for being there with EDA through the years.



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Vice Chairperson Mr Essa Al Ghurair

The Secretary General Mr Jamal Bu Hannad

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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.

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