



ISSUE 2 VOL. 2
MAY 2006

DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

EDA SIGNS AN MOU



DIBBA RESEARCH CENTRE



SRI LANKA BENTOTA

Soaking it all up

HSBC Supports EDA's Marine Conservation Efforts for the 4th Year

Plus! Shell Supports EDA, Tadweer Recycling, Year of the Turtle, Anilao's Macro Charms, Upcoming Events and more





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DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Please note that EDA's newsletter, "Divers for the Environment" includes articles written by individuals whose opinions, whilst valid, may or may not represent that of EDA. It is hoped that the newsletter can become a platform for individuals to voice their opinion on marine and diving related issues. You are welcome to submit an article for the next issue of "Divers for the Environment" released in August 2006. Send all articles/comments to Head Office edadiver@emirates.net.ae.

Cover: Main Photo by Lucy Meadows

OUR BIGGEST ISSUE YET

Dear Members,

I am excited to share with you our biggest issue yet of the EDA newsletter. EDA and its members are doing many exciting things for the environment and the diving industry in the UAE. But even though we are doing many things, we have much more to do.

EDA is continuing its efforts to oversee the recreational dive industry in the UAE. We are in touch with all the major dive centres and dive retailers in the UAE and are getting updated information on their operations. Special thanks are due to all the centres and retailers who provided their updated information in a timely manner. We are also trying to increase the number of individual members of EDA. There is strength in numbers and we'd like to give divers in the UAE the strongest voice possible to protect your interests.

EDA has also been actively collaborating with many international organizations. In February of this year, EDA assisted the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to organize in Dubai the Global Civil Society Forum to coincide with the 9th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council. This was a momentous occasion for both the United Arab Emirates and EDA. In his opening speech, UNEP Executive Director Mr. Klaus Toepfer talked about the partnership between divers and the environment, "UNEP is proud to be partner with EDA; divers are the first people who appreciate a clean, healthy and good environment and at the same time, they are the first who will be affected by a damaged, polluted environment." The UNEP Regional Director and Special Representative will be a special guest at our annual gala dinner on May 11, 2006.

EDA is also in touch with the Coral Reef Alliance to organize activities for Earth Day 2006. The Abu Dhabi EDA committee has ambitious plans for the coming year and has an activity planned in Abu Dhabi for Earth Day and for the rest the year. We are so proud of the work that our members and volunteers in Abu Dhabi are doing: organizing clean ups, school visits, fund raising events and assisting EDA to organize the diving industry in the UAE Capital.

The International Association of Handicapped Divers came to Dubai to attend the REHAB 2006 conference in March 2006. EDA met the President of the organization and we plan to collaborate on future projects together. You can read about the work they are doing in this issue.

EDA in collaboration with Sri Lankan Airlines organized a "Dive for a Cause" mission to Sri Lanka in March. Representatives from dive centres and the media were invited to join the trip. Read about the trip in this issue.

And finally, I managed to get a holiday. I visited the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and thanks to Sarah, EDA's Asia Pacific Correspondent who is based in Australia, I had great diving there. Enjoy reading the article that she wrote about the amazing time that I had there.

We thank you all for your valuable support and we hope to see you at our Annual Gala Dinner on May 11, 2006. It will be a special night seeing old friends, dancing, winning prizes and celebrating another year of diving in the UAE.



Ibrahim on Brondi Beach

Eco Regards,

Ibrahim N. Al-Zu'bi

Director of Environment Dept.
Emirates Diving Association
www.emiratesdiving.com

West Asia Coordinator,
UNEP YouthXchange Project
www.youthxchange.net

EDA SIGNS AN MOU WITH THE UAE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

The Minister of Environment and Water signed his first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Emirates Diving Association (EDA) to further protect the UAE shorelines and reefs.

Damage caused by fish traps and fishermen has caused considerable damage to the reefs along the coast. The memorandum signed with the EDA should create more awareness amongst the fishing community and divers.

Dr. Mohammed Saeed Al Kindi, Minister of Environment and Water, said that the MOU was a follow-up to the work already carried out by the EDA and the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre.

"Many things are being destroyed in the UAE that should not happen and we are working to preserve them. We need to protect corals and special fish. We look at things from the shore side and the association will be telling us what is going on underwater," said Al Kindi. "They will be able to direct us and tell us if there are any environmental effects," he added.

Al Kindi could not say which Emirate's shores are in the worst condition but said each municipality would be applying protective measures for the marine environment. "Some people take away souvenirs of corals and this is very bad," he said.

"Reef balls made of concrete and weighing between 500 and 750 kilograms were already dropped into the ocean in 2001 on the East Coast to draw fish to areas previously resembling an underwater 'empty quarter'," said Qasim Al Barwani from the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre. He added that 44 reef balls would be dropped soon in an attempt to transform the seabed into a 'forest'.

Mr. Essa Al Ghurair, Vice Chairman of the EDA, said the MOU was an extension of cooperation and in addition to achieving our environmental objectives would also help apply certain laws to curb people refilling tanks for divers illegally from unauthorised locations.



EDA presenting the UAE Pearl Dive map as a gift to the Minister



EDA signs an MOU with MOE



The Minister of Environment honours EDA for the efforts of marine conservation

"MANY THINGS ARE BEING DESTROYED IN THE UAE THAT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN AND WE ARE WORKING TO PRESERVE THEM. WE NEED TO PROTECT CORALS AND SPECIAL FISH."

HSBC SUPPORTS EDA'S MARINE CONSERVATION EFFORTS FOR THE 4th YEAR



HSBC

Ever since HSBC was founded in 1865, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been an integral part of the HSBC Group's corporate character. As a company whose entire business is built on trust and reputation, HSBC has always aspired to the highest standards of behavior. As a socially and environmentally responsible organisation, HSBC believes in contributing to the communities where it serves in many different ways and in making a positive impact on the lives of all its stakeholders – its customers, its shareholders, its employees and to society as a whole.

HSBC'S ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT:

The HSBC Group responds to environmental challenges in several ways by: improving its own energy efficiency, recycling its paper and reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases. The Group reports on how much water its offices consume, how much waste it recycles, and how much energy it uses for business travel and to run its buildings. It also records how much carbon dioxide is emitted into the atmosphere as a result of its energy use. HSBC has also become the world's first major bank to commit to becoming carbon neutral. This will involve buying electricity from renewable sources, such as wind and hydro, and investing in projects that reduce global warming. HSBC also helps its customers raise their own environmental standards, particularly through the forestry and freshwater infrastructure sector guidelines and by developing innovative partnerships with leading environmental and academic institutions. Through its US\$ 50 million, 5-year environmental partnership, "Investing in Nature", HSBC supports work being undertaken by Botanic Gardens Conservation International, WWF and Earthwatch. Projects include planning to conserve 20,000 endangered plant species; developing more sustainable river management

methods on the Yangtze, Amazon and Rio Grande; and sending 2,000 employees from 45 countries to help scientists research some of the world's most vital ecosystems.

What's more, in the Middle East, the HSBC Middle East Foundation- a £1 million charitable and community initiative, was established in 1996, to fund community, educational and environmental projects and activate them across the region.

HSBC AND EDA:

For the past four years, HSBC has supported EDA in its principle Coral Reef Monitoring project. This project aims at educating the public about the fragility of Coral reefs and their degradation, and to encourage action in the community to protect and rehabilitate damaged reefs. The project monitors the effects of expanding fish farms, current fishing pressure and the aquarium trade and promotes the benefits of Marine Protected Areas.

Maitha Al Qader, Community Affairs Officer at HSBC organises the various activities with EDA on behalf of the Bank. In March 2005, she organised an EDA diving trip, where 12 HSBC staff members took part. The divers assisted in releasing mooring buoys while the snorkelers enjoyed discovering the marine life of the UAE's East Coast. In 2005, more than 40 HSBC staff participated in "Clean-Up Arabia 2005". Amongst several HSBC staff members who support EDA, 2 are excellent divers: Leena Abbas and Hani Macki.

Leena Abbas- Marketing Manager, is the most active member and the only female UAE national who has been a regular volunteer and contributor to EDA since 2005. Her first EDA project was helping release Mooring Buoys in the UAE's East Coast. She also participated in a post Tsunami Diving Trip and traveled to Malaysia to dive in Sipadan Island as part of Coral Monitoring project. Hani Macki- Retention Unit Manager, is currently undergoing a special diving training course to participate in the Reef Monitoring Project.



Leena with EDA in Malaysia



Leena with EDA divers helping in post Tsunami clean up, Thailand

LEENA'S INVOLVEMENT WITH EDA:

Leena has been an active EDA member since 2005. Becoming an EDA member meant that not only did she get to meet other UAE divers, but also started focusing her diving towards environmental causes, such as clean-ups, reef protection, mooring buoys and many more. Being part of the EDA group known as "Divers for the Environment", is definitely in line with HSBC's corporate social responsibility and initiatives to support environmental activities.

Her first activity with EDA was to help release mooring buoys in the East Coast. As a result of increasing numbers of visitors and divers to the UAE, steps need to be taken to minimize potential disturbance that can be caused by marine users. Divers arriving at a dive site need to anchor their boat without damaging the coral reefs. It is hoped that the mooring buoys project will provide a platform for co-operation between the community and dive operators, to promote conservation in the region.

Leena was also involved with beach/ocean clean ups such as "Clean Up Arabia" and currently training for the Reef Monitoring Project, which is a global programme aimed at reporting on the state of coral reefs. The course involves recording data on the various types and condition of corals and identifying the marine life found at close proximity to these reefs. This data is compiled and sent to the Reef Check Headquarters in the U.S.A. Eventually the aim is to train school children to apply these techniques so that they can become responsible in taking care and becoming aware of how to help protect our precious marine life. Leena has been appointed as the project's moderator, in order to keep other Reef Monitoring Committee members updated with the latest training/diving dates and events.

Furthermore, her involvement with EDA has not been limited to local initiatives, but also around the world. In June, 2005, Leena was amongst 28 divers, comprising of 14 nationalities, who represented EDA for a post-Tsunami Diving Trip called "Loving Phuket, Reviving Andaman", which took place in Thailand. EDA's mission was to do an underwater clean-up in Phi Phi Island and to promote Phuket as still being a great diving spot after the Tsunami disaster. The 5-day clean-up mission was the first international underwater clean-up in Phuket.

The next amazing trip was to Malaysia to dive in Sipadan Island- one of the best diving spots in the world. Leena was amongst 19

other EDA members, selected to join the trip. "For me, Sipadan was the most memorable and amazing diving trip I've been on, with water temperatures of 28C and good visibility. I saw my first sharks (white/black-tip, hammerhead and leopard), loads of huge green & hawksbill turtles, barracudas and an amazing variety of corals in every shape, size and colour. Diving highlights were swimming through a school of Jacks and seeing a large school of huge humphead parrotfish. As members of EDA, we also did our part in contributing to the lovely island of Sipadan by initiating and engaging in useful activities. We did a clean-up of a neighbouring fishing village and also did a clean-up dive at an oil rig dive site".

Leena's latest participation with an EDA diving trip was in Sri Lanka. Again, it was a wonderful diving experience, encountering interesting marine life and being around a fantastic group of people.

"I definitely would recommend other HSBC staff- divers and non-divers, to get involved with EDA, as it is a great way to learn more about conserving our delicate ecosystem and appreciate what nature has to offer. What's more, it will be a way to support HSBC's corporate social responsibility and play an active role in our local environment".



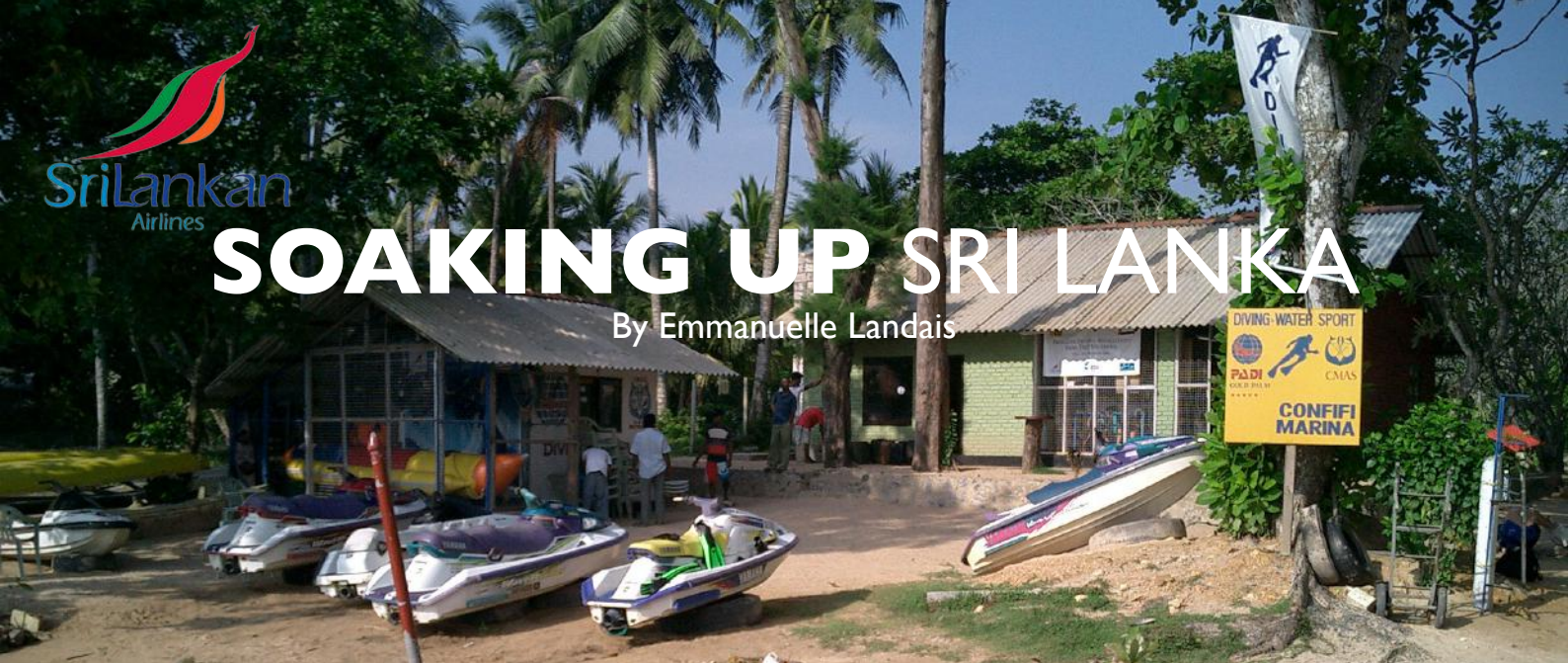
Leena - an active UAE National diver



HSBC

SOAKING UP SRI LANKA

By Emmanuelle Landais



Confifi Marina Dive Centre Photo by Ally Landes

On landing in Colombo and making our way out of the airport, the green lush jungle was already upon us and was for me, one of the best sites after coming from Dubai and its multitude of sandy yellows, greys and dust.

Our welcome flower necklaces handed out as we boarded the bus was a small but appreciated consolation for the 4 hour coach journey which awaited to take us to Bentota South, a mere 60 plus kilometers away.

We arrived at the Eden Resort and Spa in Bentota around lunchtime and were allocated our rooms after meeting Fred Dessart.

Ahh Fred...What can be said about our gracious diving host! An entertaining character to say the least, Dessart, 38, is a Frenchman who has been residing in Sri Lanka for 13 years and alternates between the Emerald Isle, one of Sri Lanka's many nicknames and Corsica, following the seasons.

"Once we were underwater, I thought my dive computer was broken because it gave a depth reading of 24 metres on the seabed compared to the actual and usual 28 metres," he recalled. "I thought it's impossible to be the tide. My dive buddy's computer also gave a reading of 24 metres so we thought something must be wrong. Where can 5 metres of water go?" he thought to himself.

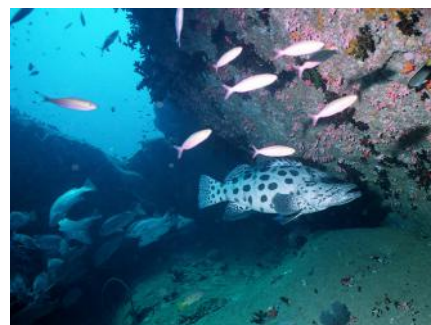
Unknown to Dessart and his team at the time, while they were underwater, the



Paul and Nina's flower necklaces Photo by Ally Landes



Emmanuelle Photo by Francis Louie Uy



Potatoe Grouper Photo by Francis Louie Uy

Despite the distance - this was real life. Bouncing along the tarmac road, each sight we passed was better than the previous, and digital cameras at the ready - we soaked up Sri Lanka as it unfolded before us.

The streets do not just bustle - they are uncontrolled with life, frying food and petrol smells, all to the soundtrack of speeding tuk tuks. People walk oblivious to oncoming traffic, school girls dressed in immaculate white uniforms make their way along dusty roads while tall coconut palms sway high above the rooftops and banana trees sprout out from any available space.

Dessart has been running the LSR dive centre at Confifi Marina for over a decade with his wife. The centre was completely destroyed after the tsunami and like most of Sri Lanka, was shut down after the natural disaster in December 2004. Dessart reopened the centre in December 2005.

On the day the tsunami hit, Dessart was in the water with some tourists. "We had received no prior warning and the sea seemed calm. We set off around 9:30AM and the only thing that struck me was that the current flowed differently than usual but you know, we're used to strong currents," said Dessart.

wave that would crash into the coast a few hours later was beginning to form. The wave passed over them while they were scuba diving.

"Once we were back on the boat we saw fishing boats that were heading out to sea. They told us we would be safer if we stayed away from the coast where the waves were crashing. I would have willingly have stayed out at sea but the people on my boat were worried about family who had stayed back in the hotels," recalled Dessart.

"We got back to shore three hours after the first wave and were hit by the second wave. It was the longest 20 minutes in my

life. I really thought 'this is it, I'm going to die...' I just literally hung on to a coconut tree for my life. Some of the local guys climbed up and hung on near the top. In the end, we managed to get to the roof of the centre," said Dessart.

Now the centre operates much as before minus one of Dessart's biggest boats, which was destroyed and could accommodate 12 divers. He now uses a fishing boat and small motorboats to take divers to 10 of the dive sites on offer at Confifi Marina.

On day two, we dived at two sites, Modoun and Siri about 5 kilometres out at sea. The consensus amongst the team was that these were the best dives out of the trip. The visibility was around 20 metres and we saw "lots of colourful fish" just as Dessart had predicted in the 'briefing'.

Much to Paul's - from Divers Down in Khor Fakhan - credit, he gave us entertaining and pretty accurate briefings from the boat after checking out the wall of dive sites at the centre. I took my first underwater photos thanks to my buddy Francis, from Al Boom diving centre.

On day three, we aborted our second dive after the morning dive turned to stress and struggle for a few of us. The boat driver could not find the dive site, which led to circling around in choppy water with diesel fumes coming at us.

Once we were in the water, some divers had not been able to buddy up due to being in different boats. For me, getting caught in the ropes and almost having two boats crash into me (had it not been for Lucy from the Dive Pavillion) was fairly hectic.

But onwards and downwards... We dived to 27 metres at a location called Shark Point - but no, we didn't see any.

That afternoon instead, while the wetsuits were drying, we visited a turtle sanctuary. The Turtle Project has been around for 18 years and works to educate the local community to preserve turtle eggs instead of eating them.

Collecting turtle eggs is actually illegal, however, this action ensures the survival of the turtles. Poaching is common as eggs are considered a delicacy, explained Kapila from the sanctuary.



Baby Turtle Photo by Lucy Meadows

"The people are poor and they need to make money so they will always catch the eggs. Now the fishermen sell us the eggs instead. We pay 6 rupees (20 fils) per egg so that we can put them in the hatchery and eventually release them back into the ocean," said Kapila.

"Sometimes the fishermen, they come with 200 or 300 eggs. It can go up to 500 eggs. The turtles come to this area all year round to lay their eggs," said Kapila.

When the tsunami hit, the owner of the sanctuary grabbed two of the turtles - as many as he could carry - and ran for it. From these two turtles, the sanctuary was recreated and despite losing over 20,000 eggs, the turtle population is once again getting a helping hand.



A Tsunami Destruction Photo by Ally Landes

The next day, we drove to Kandy to see an elephant orphanage and spend our last night in Sri Lanka. We did enjoy the hotel's hospitality and especially the beach side bar who played us some cracking Bob Marley covers but nothing can beat Francis' "Knocking on heaven's door" solo to a near empty but thoroughly enthralled hotel bar audience, live on electric guitar with a small Sri Lankan man accompanying on the keyboards.



Elephants bathing and Sri Lanka's EDA members

Pinnawela elephant orphanage is situated between the present capital Colombo and the ancient royal residence Kandy in the hills of central Sri Lanka. It was established in 1975 by the Sri Lanka Wildlife department.

This 24 acres large elephant orphanage is also a breeding place for elephants. Twenty elephants were born here since 1984 and it now has 'the greatest herd of elephants in captivity in the world'. By 2003, the elephant population had grown to 65.

Visitors can observe the feeding of the baby elephants everyday or have their picture taken amongst the herd.

In the afternoon, around 30 elephants are led through the street for 400 metres down to the river Maha Oya for a two-hour bath where visitors get the chance to have photos taken while wading in the river.

This sanctuary is a must-see for any traveler in Sri Lanka as it offers the best opportunity to observe the young elephants at play and get covered in elephant slobber.



Elephants walking the streets Photo by Ally Landes

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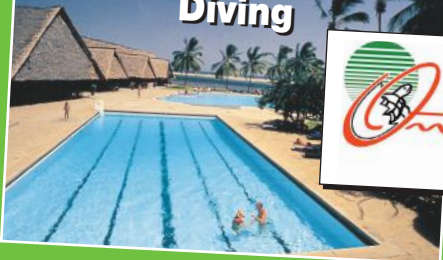
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CELEBRATING 35th EARTH DAY

WITH THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN ABU DHABI

By Kathleen Russell (Al Masaoood), EDA Abu Dhabi Coordinator



Cute ACS kids with their hats made from recycled materials



EDA Abu Dhabi Coordinator Kathleen Russel explaining to ACS kids that the oceans cover 71% of the earth's surface



ACS kids in their eco-green shirts and multi-hued hats



ACS kids during the Earth Day school assembly

This year, the American Community School (ACS) in Abu Dhabi celebrated the 35th anniversary of Earth Day in April during a primary school-wide assembly. Over 350 students aged 4 to 12 participated throughout the day. Students paraded into the assembly with their eco-green t-shirts while others displayed their multi-hued hats made with recycled products. During the assembly, EDA Abu Dhabi's Coordinator Kathleen Russell presented a lively and colorful slide show highlighting that everyone should be a **"friend to the sea"** and find ways to protect this valuable resource. Her informative talk included underwater images of local marine life with video footages of the black tip reef sharks and a 5-7m whale shark sited off the East Coast of the UAE and Oman. In contrast, images of man's negative impact on the sea was also highlighted, example of which are: marine debris found in the water, pollution going into the sea from the land, over fishing and global warming. ACS students learned that many types of marine debris take a long time to decompose naturally (often hundreds of years) and marine life can mistakenly ingest or can get entangled with marine debris causing harm or death. They all agreed to help by continuing to clean up their favourite beach and swimming areas, organizing local clean-ups with the school, writing to the government to send a message that they care about the environment and to spread the news about protecting the marine environment. The message to the students was clear and that is to ensure everyone plays an important role in protecting the earth's ocean.

On behalf of EDA, we hope that you will also make a difference and join in the next Clean Up Arabia to be held on the 21st-22nd of September 2006.

Happy Earth Day!
EDA Abu Dhabi

TESTING THE WATERS IN AUSTRALIA

By Sarah Naarden, EDA Asia Pacific correspondent



Sarah with Cod Fish

The Great Barrier Reef finds itself near the top of most divers must do list. Ibrahim Al Zu'bi shares his experience with EDA members on his recent trip to Australia.

Sarah Naarden, EDA Asia Pacific correspondent accounts for their adventures.

To really feel like you have landed in Sydney Australia, it is recommended to make your way to Circular Quay and take a ferry to Manly Beach. Even with jetlag, encountering breathtaking views of the Opera house and Harbour Bridge from the water really awakens the spirit. Perhaps the highlight of Sydney is climbing to the top of Sydney Harbour Bridge. With a team of 14 people, all dressed in ridiculous looking space suits, the climb of 1400 steps (37 stories of a building) is a rewarding one. Magnificent blue skies allowed views of the Blue Mountains across the harbour and the active boat life below.

The picture perfect weather came to an end in Sydney. In Cairns, the unusually late wet season normally from November to March had extended into mid-April. It was not until the boat was deep into the Great Barrier reef that the detection of a cyclone approaching us was made.

Oblivious to this information the dive team assembled at the small aircraft terminal in Cairns dividing up into three groups to board the six-seater planes. Tropical rains poured down making the airstrip like a slippery slide before take off. For the first time I listened to every detail of the safety procedures. Our young pilot looked newly graduated to add to the tension. He received a large clap when the plane landed safely at Lizard Island where the dive boat was waiting for us.

The crew from Mike Ball Expeditions welcomed us aboard Spoilsport, the 50 ft catamaran taking us on a 3 day adventure with 4-5 dives a day planned. Before sailing off the divers introduced themselves and comprised of nationalities from all over

the world including Italy, Argentina, US, UK, Germany, Brazil, Switzerland, two navy officers from Australia and one Californian who could be mistaken for Arnold Swartznegger.

Over the days the crew aboard Spoilsport became our extended family. Perhaps the most popular of the crew was Pete, the gourmet chef from Switzerland. He had worked in the Hilton Cairo before pursuing his passion for diving and cooking in the Great Barrier Reef. On one night we would have a choice of chicken filled with camembert or mackerel with salsa. On other nights we were treated with dishes from Asian, Mexican and Italian themes.

Another popular crew member was our captain, affectionately named Pete the Pirate. On one occasion he spent the entire night monitoring the cyclone as it was slowly approaching our planned dive sites. It was rather exciting witnessing Cyclone Monica category 3 on the radar monitors. It was also a rather choppy



Anemone Fish



Kune Chromodoris



Featherstar



The Dive Boat



Mike Ball friendly staff

affair rushing away from it. At one stage the boat rocked side to side during dinner causing havoc in the kitchen with plates smashing just like scenes of the Titanic. Pete the Pirate was also a skilled entertainer. On the last night of our Mike Ball expedition the team were encouraged to wear their crazy shirts, eat shrimps from the Barbie and sing Australian songs accompanied by the guitar and some improvised didgeridoo playing.

In general the crew were extremely professional with very tight safety procedures. Enough of the crew and now down to the diving.

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest marine park in the world and is considered to be some of the world's best diving in the world. The Reef stretches 2000 km down the Queensland coast and supports 400 species of coral, 1500 fish species, 6 species of turtles and 23 marine mammals including the yearly migration of whales and dugongs. In 1975, the Reef was declared a Marine Park reserve and in 1981 it was listed as a World Heritage site. A typical 3-4 day live aboard journey covers a lot of distance and therefore each site is quite different from the next.

To begin our underwater adventures, SpoilSport moored at a dive site called Cod hole, famous for the friendly resident human sized Potato cods. It seemed they enjoyed the company of divers and were not shy of posing with the cameras. The vibrant healthy corals here are also home to lionfish, yellow pipefish, reef and grey sharks and giant Maori Wrasse.

From Cod Hole, the catamaran worked its way down South to Pixie Pinnacle. The dive was made in a clockwise direction working our way around the 30m coral head formation. A spectacular collection of golden Georgian sea fans, crimson feather stars, salmon anemone, magenta bubble corals and lime green and teal cabbage corals were displayed. All colors and patterns that seem to have inspired the latest color predictions in fashion can be seen here. The occasional patch of sunlight illuminated juvenile clown fish as if they were auditioning for Finding Nemo 2.

At night a new set of cast members hit the underwater stage. From the cavernous coral formations cleaner shrimps, hermit crabs, technicolour nudibranch, and moray eels emerged. The moon had been full the night before and orange glowing phosphorous could also help lead the way around the surreal landscape.

Early next morning the dive team headed for Challenger Bay which proved to be quite a challenge swimming against strong currents and limited visibility. At first the site seemed like a ghost town. On closer inspection the macro life began to emerge. Schools of juvenile batfish swayed with the currents and darted around a large parrotfish. Several nudibranchs were spotted and a guest appearance was made by a clever Cuttlefish, one who transformed itself from a deep burgundy color to a dark green. It was the last dive in the Northern Great Barrier areas before the boat was about to fast track south to avoid surfing the cyclone.

Heading south, closer to Cairns the team had exclusive access to the Nursery Brommie which is usually populated by day tourists. Similar to Pixie Pinnacle, one can see why the spectacular coral formations are World Heritage listed. In contrast to the ghost town this pocket of the Barrier reef was alive with the frenzied activity of fish similar to peak hour in Tokyo central station. Schools of Barracuda, trevally crossed paths with schools of Batfish and Angelfish against a backdrop of dramatic coral formations

In the months to come namely June and July Mike Ball Expeditions become increasingly popular in the Great Barrier Reef with the migration of Minke whales. More information about the Great Barrier dive trips can be found on: www.mikeball.com

In completing the brief visit to Australia, a quick 3 day visit to Melbourne was made. A city tour was squeezed in, strolling down the Yarra River along a Parisian style café promenade to Federation Square. This is the new heart of the city with a frenzy of cultural activity and a good place for a session of people watching. A brief tour was made to some of Melbourne's famous park and beaches. Brunch in the royal Botanical gardens was followed by lunch at St Kilda beachside suburb with a visit to the handy craft market.

A country tour of Victoria was made through the Tuscan autumn colors of the vineyards of the Yarra Valley to Healesville sanctuary. Here one can encounter close up viewing of koalas, kangaroos, wombats and platypus. With more time available, a trip to visit Phillip Island's Fairy Penguins and a drive around the coast of the Twelve Apostles would also be recommended for any EDA diver thinking they may venture to Australia one day. I hope more of you venture down under and test the waters.



A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION A LITTLE MORE ACTION

Written by Lina Chaaban, EnviroCare Manager, Tadweer

Everyone talks about the environment these days and preserving it for future generations. But in the immortal words of Elvis Presley, "A little less conversation, a little more action please. A little more bite and a little less bark!"

The dubious honour of having one of the highest waste levels in the world certainly indicates the time for firm action in Dubai; action underpinned by awareness and deep commitment. All this waste, 50% of which is organic (mainly food), goes to the landfills, where it then lies for hundreds of years without degrading. This obviously contaminates the soil and the atmosphere since the landfill releases toxic methane gas as well.

The primary issues at hand then, are to promote better waste management and reduce the amount of waste dumped in landfills, while properly disposing of the rest of the waste.

Tadweer, the largest waste management unit in the region and one of the biggest in the world, was set up with the vision of providing a concrete solution to address these issues. A strategic partner of the Dubai municipality, Tadweer's mission is to create awareness among the public through a long-term process of educational campaigns to let the people understand how to manage their waste, resulting in reduced use of landfills and saving valuable natural resources.

Tadweer has even established the EnviroCare department to handle and tackle all environment issues. A single line operation that was custom built to suit the requirements specific to the region, Tadweer's plant handles waste from segregation to recycling in one line. Recycling is a positive step, which Tadweer is taking to help the environment. It encourages us to think about the waste we create and take responsibility for what happens to it.

Tadweer targets the whole of Dubai and will be assisted in this by the Dubai Municipality. They have just begun operations with the launch of Line One and have a long-term plan that includes expanding to other areas of Dubai and further a field in the course of the year.

The awareness campaign Tadweer will be rolling out will focus on the importance of preserving the environment by educating the public on how to minimize the impact on the environment and the impact of waste on landfills. The awareness programme

is designed to target various segments and age groups of society, in order to be most effective.

Tadweer has a range of specific plans in the pipeline, targeting specific problems from collection to dealing with organic waste. Line One is but the first step in a series of operations and activities that Tadweer will be rolling out in due course.

Tadweer is counting on the help of organisations like the EDA to partner with them in increasing awareness and making people more responsible in the methods used to dispose of waste.

An old saying goes... "what goes around, comes around." We'd love to send stuff back for another "go-around".



RECYCLING TRIVIA:

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2 barrels of oil

4,100 kilowatts of energy

3.2 cubic yards of landfill space

6,953 gallons of water

DIBBA RESEARCH CENTRE AND EDA: PARTNERING TO FURTHER PRESERVE DIBBA ROCK

By Emmanuelle Landais



Emmanuelle Landais

A fleet of 11 dhows are going to be sunk off the East Coast to attract and create sea life to the already existing protected areas near Dibba, which is flourishing with multicoloured fish.

Marine research and preservation on the East Coast has been underway since 1995 when Dibba rock was declared a marine reserve. Since then and especially over the last 3 years, the zone from Dibba to Khor Fakkan is being closely monitored for the best of the environment and the large fishing community.

The Ministry of Environment and Fisheries established the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre 3 years ago to develop the reserve and educate the community on how to get the best of the ocean.

"Fishermen would drop fish traps directly on the corals, nets would get entangled trapping fish and destroying the corals and anchors from boats would often just be dragged on the seabed causing a lot of damage," said Qasim Amour, Head of Research at the Centre.

"Dibba rock is now a reserve marked with yellow buoys and fishermen have to fish outside of the zone. They are very cooperative and we have hardly any cases of people breaking the rules. A guard from the Dibba municipality is constantly patrolling the rock to deter poachers as well," said Amour.

There are around 1200 fishermen in the East Coast and in Dibba, 360 boats are

registered. Amour said the maximum number of boats in the water at one time is around 260 as some fishermen have more than one boat.

Poachers or fishing boats found in the zone can be charged up to Dhs3000 or 6 months in jail, added Amour.

In 2001, 220 concrete balls were dropped around the area to replenish it, encourage coral growth and attract fish and sea life. In a few weeks, the operation will be repeated with 21 reef balls being dropped to extend the marine reserve. More reef balls will also be dropped in Abu Dhabi. The water is around 15 metres deep and further out to sea at around 32 metres, 11 dhows are going to be dropped into the ocean to regenerate the zone.

The project is being done with the participation of the Emirates Diving Association (EDA), a UNEP-affiliated volunteer organization which has signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to protect marine life and aid the federal government with research.

Researchers from the Centre and EDA recently mapped out the areas to position the reef balls. "We are going to drop the reef balls so that we don't get in the way of the fishermen and respect their fishing territory. We are going to extend the reserve by putting the reef balls on the outskirts," said Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi, Director of EDA.

"The reef balls will be dropped at a 1 metre distance from each other and in sets. Each set will, in turn, be 3 metres away from each other. The measurement taken today has allowed us to see how far out we will place them," he said. "We wanted to make sure the sea bed would be strong enough and the reef balls would not sink. We found that the sea bed is rocky so it is in perfect condition," he added.

Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre manager Ali Abdullah Ali Al Dhanhany has created other improvised underwater environments by weaving palm fronds to collapsible outside netting of fish traps, after removing the actual trap. "The traps disintegrate after maybe

18 months and only coral will remain. We want fish to lay eggs and fingerlings to settle here," he said.

Since the centre opened, Amour said the local population has become more interested in diving and is showing an active interest in the area, turning up in large numbers for annual cleanups.



Qasim and Aly from the Ministry of Environment, Dibba Office



EDA's Al-Zu'bi taking underwater measurements



EDA divers with Ministry of Environment staff



Be aware: Marine Reserve



YEAR OF THE TURTLE

KICKS OFF WITH **CALL FOR COOPERATION**

Time for Countries and Communities to Take a Stand for the Globally Threatened Sea Turtles

Year of the Turtle kicks off with Call for Cooperation for 'Our Ocean's Ambassadors'

Under the banner of the 'Year of the Turtle – 2006', the organizers aim to spotlight the threats and encourage even greater public support for these extraordinary marine creatures.

The Indian Ocean – South-East Asia region is home to six different species of marine turtles whose populations have declined in the past decades, some to the point of extinction.

In Malaysia, for example, annual counts of leatherback turtle nests have dropped alarmingly from 5,000 in the 1960s to less than ten in recent years. Elsewhere, illegal turtle harvests continue to occur. Recently in Indonesia, police apprehended a fishing boat off Bali carrying 158 Green turtles, most of which were safely released back into the wild.

The new campaign has been organized by the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean – South-East Asia (IOSEA) Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which is linked to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It is being undertaken in collaboration with Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources.

The Year of the Turtle involves a series of public events and activities in 25 countries of the region throughout 2006 under the banner "Cooperating to Conserve Marine Turtles: Our Ocean's Ambassadors".

A key part of the campaign will be to unite distant communities in a common cause. For example primary school children in Australia are developing a new turtle education guide, special beach and reef clean-ups are being organized in Thailand, researchers in Iran are tagging turtles to help track their movements, and underwater film festivals are planned in the Seychelles to raise public awareness of the marine environment.

"Many nations are already working hard to conserve these remarkable animals, by protecting important habitats and requiring changes to fishing practices that are harmful to turtles. The Year of the Turtle celebration will recognize the important role of sea turtles in the marine environment, as well as their significant cultural value for people in many countries," said Douglas Hykle, IOSEA MoU Coordinator.

In a statement read out during the launch, Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan emphasized the need for even more cooperation between countries to ensure the survival of these highly migratory animals.

"Sea turtles are modern ambassadors of our oceans, linking countries and communities around the world. They are many things to many people: a traditional source of food, the basis

of livelihoods centered on sustainable tourism, a focus of investigative research, or simply an enduring source of inspiration and awe. We all have a common interest in their conservation," she said.

Accidental killing of sea turtles in fishing gear, damage to turtle nesting beaches and coral reefs, and unsustainable consumption are among the major threats they face.

Natural disasters, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, have also taken a toll. A draft report discussed at the launch reveals that the tsunami had a profound impact on local communities that had been working closely with turtle conservation projects in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The process of rebuilding these bonds has gradually begun.

India's remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands, home to about 500 nesting leatherback turtles, were especially hard hit by the tsunami, which occurred during the peak of the nesting season.

The tsunami destroyed several nesting beaches and inundated many coastal areas with sea water. "In the short-term, thousands of unhatched turtle eggs would have been destroyed" said Dr. Mark Hamann, compiler of the IOSEA leatherback-tsunami assessment, "but the impacts of the tsunami need to be viewed over a longer time scale. Leatherback turtles have been breeding in the region for thousands of years, and will have survived similar natural calamities in the past."

Elsewhere, there is evidence to show that conservation efforts are succeeding, with some areas reporting increased sea turtle populations – but there is still much work to do.

Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP, said: "In 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, governments agreed to reverse the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. Turtles are, in many ways, flagship species. If we can conserve turtles, we can do a lot for other marine life forms and thus help the world meet the 2010 target. I wish the organizers and those involved every success".

The Year of the Turtle will run through 31 December 2006, with events planned at country and local levels throughout the Indian Ocean – South-East Asian region.

**“MANY NATIONS ARE
ALREADY WORKING HARD
TO CONSERVE THESE
REMARKABLE ANIMALS”**

For more information check out: www.ioseaturtles.org



Shell SUPPORTS

REEF MONITORING PROJECT

Emirates Diving Association Leads Initiatives to Save Marine Life in the Gulf



Mr. Hussain Al Mahmoudi with Mr. Essa Al-Ghurair-EDA

In a bid to preserve marine life in the Gulf, Emirates Diving Association (EDA), with the help of Shell and other sponsors, is continuing its work on the Reef Monitoring Project for the year 2006.

The Reef Monitoring Project is an exciting project at the forefront of EDA's activities. The routine, standardised surveys will yield important baseline data for the East Coast. It will give EDA a more accurate impression of the reefs' health over time. This project has the potential to monitor the effects of: expanding fish farms, increasing diving at certain sites and current fishing pressure & the aquarium trade. It can also document the benefits (if any) of Marine Protected Areas.

"Shell is committed to conducting its business in an environmentally sustainable way", said Hussain Al Mahmoudi, External Affairs Manager, Shell Markets Middle East. "We are eager, therefore, to become involved in initiatives to conserve the environment. Our support for the Reef Monitoring Project is one important way through which we can demonstrate how serious we are about environmental issues."

Shell will not only provide financial support (such as purchase of vital equipment) but scientific help as well, including analysis of the Association's findings.

EDA has set up a special "Reef Monitoring Project (RMP) Team" from its members to monitor marine life on the coasts of the UAE and to document negative effects on the corals. The team at the

EDA will be examining the various sources of pollution that are attacking the UAE's coral reefs. There isn't enough information available on pollution. It is necessary to dive on each major site to get an overview of the situation and make recommendations for improvement. Companies such as Shell, who support these projects, play a huge part in preserving marine life for future generations.

This opportunity will also place EDA and Dubai in the forefront of marine conservation. Plans are currently being made to train additional teams in the UAE & Oman, allowing a greater scope of West Asia's reefs to be monitored.



Coral Monitoring Project 15

NETWORKING ON THE DHARA

By Jason Sockett

Due to the rough seas the west coast experienced during February, dive sites like the Dhara MV became unsafe to dive with all the fishing nets becoming entangled in the wreck.

Stefan Spruck led a team of divers from the Pavilion Dive Centre with Moe from the EDA to cut the nets away. Stefan and his team spent 3 days painstakingly cutting and untangling the nets.



Divers with nets collected from the Dhara

Unfortunately before Stefan's team could clear all the nets many species became entangled including turtles and died. During the cleaning exercise we did manage to entangle a rather unusual creature 'Moe' we decided to release him, don't want him scaring the other fish!!!

For the first time this year the rays are back in force or maybe it's the visibility getting better and they have been there the whole time and we've just not been able to see them.



A bundle of nets

EMIRATES DIVING ASSOCIATION HOLDS GENERAL MEETING WITH LOCAL DIVE INDUSTRY

The Emirates Diving Association (EDA) invited all UAE dive centers, dive retailers and other related businesses to the EDA Majlis in Diving Village on March 1, 2006 to discuss EDA's plans for the coming year and to provide an opportunity to listen to the concerns of the local dive industry.

As the official UAE Dive Association, EDA is recommitting itself to ensuring that the local dive industry is safe, professional and growing. EDA continues to look for ways it can support the local dive industry and coordinate with local dive businesses to promote diving in the UAE.

Many of the premier dive businesses in the UAE were represented at the meeting, including Scuba Dubai, Scubatec, Pavilion Dive Centre, Al Boom Diving, Al Marsa Musandam, Diving House and Technical Diving International Center.

After a quick discussion of EDA's plans for the coming year, the dive businesses had a chance to share their feedback with EDA. Almost all of the participants had constructive ideas for what EDA could do to help ensure that the dive industry in the UAE grows in a safe, professional manner.

Topics discussed included the next Dive Middle East Exhibition, a possible familiarization trip for dive operators from around the world, general marketing for diving in the UAE, dive insurance for

UAE divers and the problems of unauthorized dive equipment retailers in the UAE.

All agreed the meeting was a success. It was decided that EDA would continue to hold general meetings for the dive industry on a quarterly basis to act as a forum for the local dive industry to discuss their plans and concerns.



Meeting members



SRI LANKA: THE REAL “PALM ISLAND”

By Paul Sant

After an overnight flight from Dubai, I awakened to the sound of the captain telling us that we will be landing shortly. After wiping the sleepy dust from my eyes, I glanced over people's heads out of the window and saw GREEN! It is amazing how much the colour green can affect you after 3 years without leaving sandy UAE.

Once we landed, I took in the smell of vegetation and dust-free air. What a nice sensation!

I thought that maybe only Colombo was full of palm trees but I was proven wrong because the whole of Sri Lanka has palm trees with houses built around the vegetation - a truly green overload.

The three-hour transfer was spent taking in the scenery and being amazed by the way all the drivers avoided hitting each other. At times, I am sure the bus shrank in size to fit through gaps in traffic!

The hotel looked just as it did in the magazine, a lovely location matched by very friendly staff and with excellent facilities. Hard to believe that this was the same place the tsunami hit in 2004. In fact, the only sign of damage I saw from the bus window were a few fishing boats still parked in the middle of nowhere.



After sleeping like a log, I awoke ready and excited about our days ahead. The reason why we were there was for Divers Down to assess the opportunities Sri Lanka could offer our customers and

hence, encourage tourism back to the tsunami-affected areas.

We arrived at a very picturesque dive centre and kitted up for the first of two dives. The journey out to the site was emotional; I had my first real look at the damage inflicted on the coastline and the people of Sri Lanka. Where hotels once stood, there remained shells. I am not talking about little buildings here but 5-star resorts that once employed hundreds of locals. They stand as a stark reminder of what a cruel thing nature can be. Yet the people of Sri Lanka play it down and are very humble about what happened here. In Europe, we get all fired up over leaves on a train track! The Sri Lankans may not have forgotten the disaster but to them, it has happened and now, they are just trying to get back to normality and not dwell on the past.



Diving in Sri Lanka was for me, very nice, not being a clear water diver. It was a pleasant surprise to shoot wide-angle video with my lamps on and not have a snowstorm effect. The marine life was not as prolific as the East Coast; however, there was enough to keep the video and myself busy. There was no damage to the marine environment, which surprised all of us. It seemed the tsunami only affected the landmass.

The remaining dives were all of the same visibility, around 30-40m, and very warm water, around 29-30C. A shorty was more than enough environmental protection.

I will mention that the dive centres are not like here in the UAE as they have no governing body such as the EDA. Do not go there expecting new facilities and equipment but the diving was great. There are basic services for divers. I also recommend that you complete your advanced course before going as this offers more opportunity and diving variety.



Diving holidays are not just about diving, and Sri Lanka has a lot more to offer than just diving. We managed to cram a lot into the days we had and I saw things that I have never seen before - rubber plantations, pineapple bushes and spice gardens to mention a few. The country is so fertile in land as well as in culture and it makes an ideal adventure holiday destination.

The memories that will stay with me are the elephant orphanage and what remains of the tsunami damage.

The people deserve to have their tourism industry back to what it was before the tsunami. It's good, however, that to the untrained eye, you would not even notice the devastation that occurred 2 years ago.

Thank you EDA for the invitation to attend this trip. In return, Divers Down will be planning a trip to Sri Lanka and will email the dates later on in the year. For all the readers, please consider all tsunami-affected areas in your travel plans.



UNDERWATER I CAN FLY

“Being in the water gives a feeling of being able-bodied again” as one diver expressed his feelings after his first scuba experience. Rolli Olli, a wheelchair bound diver from Germany, said: “underwater I can fly”.

The feeling of being able to move in any direction and to take part in an adventure like scuba diving is a big attraction to disabled people.

Imagine as a scuba diver the freedom you feel when floating through the water and breathing from your regulator. Now think of someone who depends on a wheelchair to move around on land, once in the water he or she experiences the same freedom as anyone else.

Scuba diving is one of the most accessible activities for disabled people as no special equipment is required. You can dive with your friends or family and share the same experience as an able bodied person. Scuba diving is a very social activity since you always dive with a buddy and sharing your underwater adventure is part of the magic.

The International Association for Handicapped Divers is a non-profit foundation that provides certification for a disabled person who wishes to become a diver and provides training for certified divers to assist or train the disabled diver.

The Pro Training is a special training program for dive professionals. In a comprehensive two-day program they will be shown how to adapt their dive activities and training in order to make them accessible for the disabled diver-to-be.

The Dive Partner program is intended for experienced divers (rescue diver and up) who want to dive with disabled divers. They will learn some important do's and don'ts when diving together.

For the disabled diver, the IAHD has developed a challenging system of certification levels. The main focus is to train the divers towards the highest level of competence they can attain. With the main focus on diver safety the IAHD has come up with 3 levels of certification for each available program. This system is used for all the dive programs the IAHD has to offer; from confined water diver and open water diver up to experienced diver.

PRO TRAINING

The pro training is a two-day program in which dive professionals will be shown ways to adapt their diving activities and training programs for the disabled. It is not only academics in a classroom; a large part of the training is in a pool and even in the open water. Talking about adapting your procedures is one thing; actually putting them into practice with some disabled divers is a completely new experience for even the most experienced divers.

The Pro Training is open for Divemaster and higher certified divers from any international recognised training agency.

DIVE CHALLENGE TOUR (DCT)

The DCT was started by the IAHD in order to reach out into the disabled community to promote scuba diving as an activity. It is an event where a disabled person gets the opportunity to make a try dive in a pool environment. Once they have taken their first breath underwater and tasted the feeling of freedom it is a lot easier to explain to them that diving is truly an accessible experience.

TRAVEL

The IAHD has certified instructors around the world. This makes it possible for the

certified disabled diver to go on holiday. Instructors are available in many of the popular dive destinations as, for example the Egyptian Red Sea, the Caribbean, Australia, and Asia but also in Europe.

NITROX

The IAHD recommends the use of Nitrox for its divers. The IAHD has a special Nitrox 36 program that can be used from the first open water dive. The IAHD is also looking into the market of rebreathers. Some benefits are very clear and work is in progress to develop an entry-level program.

EQUIPMENT

Although no special equipment is required it will be clear that some special adjustments to diving equipment can be useful. The IAHD is actively involved with several manufacturers to make adjustments to diving equipment that often are not only beneficial for disabled divers but also for the able bodied divers.

DIVE INDUSTRY

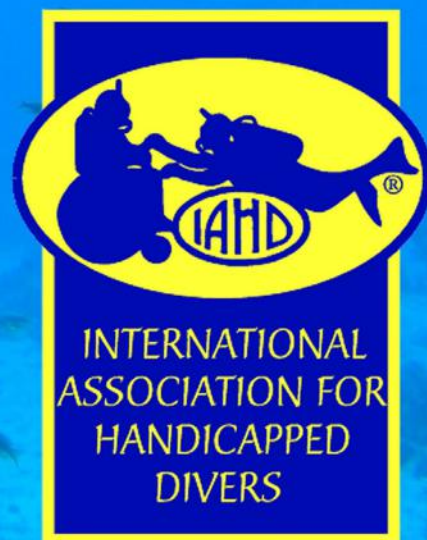
The IAHD works with as many dive agencies around the world as possible in order to make diving accessible. The IAHD does not have its own open water or advanced open water manuals. An IAHD instructor will still use the manuals and video's he/she is trained with, only the certification will be through the IAHD to allow them to continue to dive wherever they like.

The IAHD promotes itself and scuba diving at dive shows and rehab shows around the world. Members will receive a quarterly newsletter through the internet.



www.iahd.org

More information about the IAHD is available on the internet



SRI LANKAN AIRLINES PRO 4 STAR ARUGAM BAY, SRI LANKA

JUNE 16th – 23rd 2006

Surfs Up in Arugam Bay...The ASP World Tour of Surfing is coming to Sri Lanka!



The pristine shores of Sri Lanka's fabled 'Arugam Bay' will host the first ever Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) rated event in Sri Lanka – June 2006. The 'SriLankan Airlines Pro' will see some of the surfing world's best proponents of the sport lining up for a chance to win the US\$75,000 prize, and as an added bonus, visit beautiful Sri Lanka.

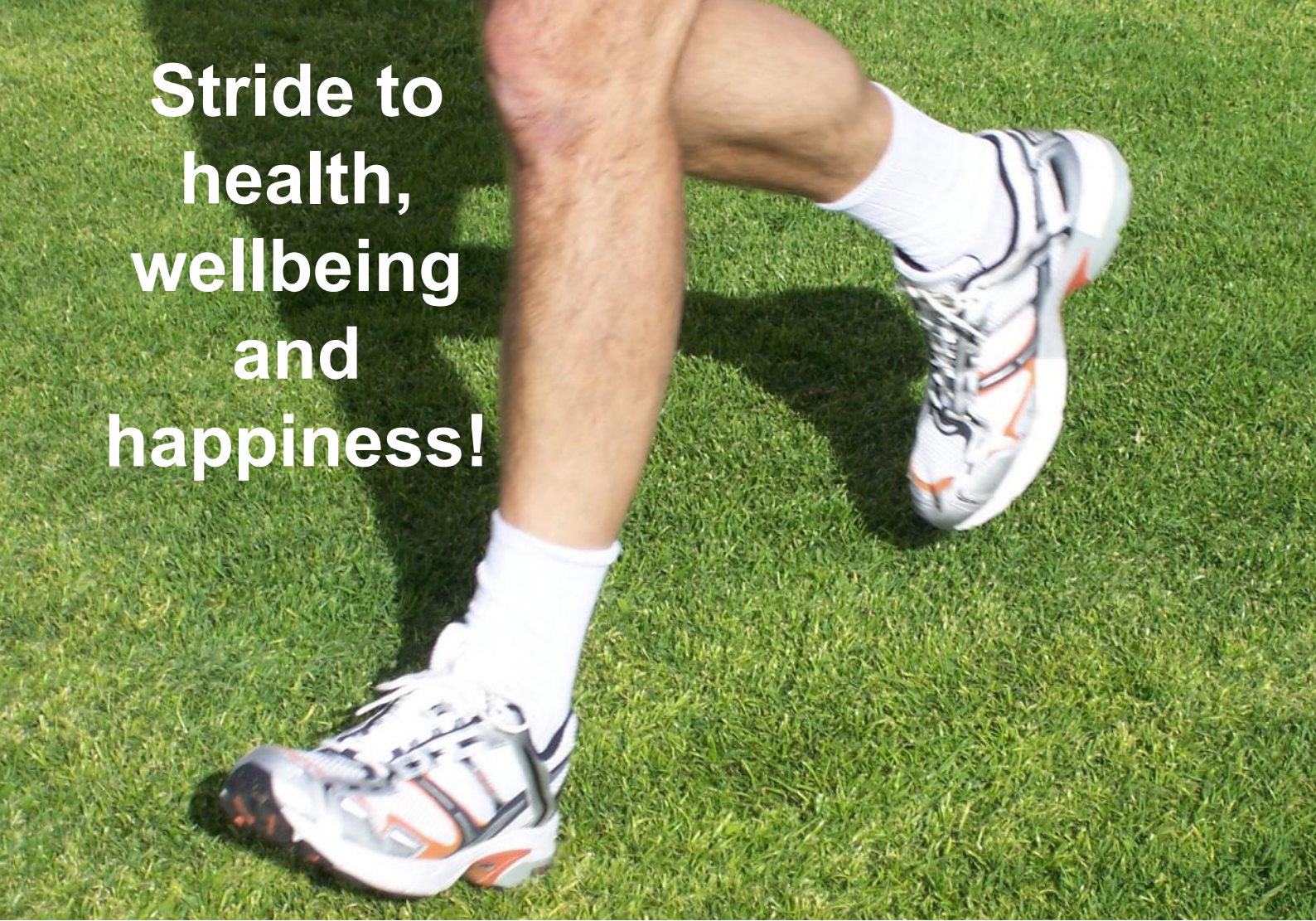
The legendary wave at Arugam Bay is known by the surfing fraternity world wide for its exceptional quality. From the monsoon season months of May through September, Arugam Bay offers a fast breaking perfect sandpoint wave. Coupled with the fabled Sri Lankan hospitality, Arugam Bay is now a 'must-visit location' for many surfers from around the globe and will set the scene for a fantastic international surfing showdown...

SriLankan Airlines has established Arugam Bay as a definitive whistle-stop on the coveted Association of Surfing Professional World Tour. The inaugural 'SriLankan Airlines Pro,' an official ASP World Qualifying Series event sponsored by SriLankan Airlines will take place at Arugam Bay over a seven day period from June 16th to June 23rd. The other highlight of this tournament is the renowned surf life style brand "Quicksilver's" affiliation to this event. Quicksilver will produce a DVD during the tournament called 'Boarding Pass' and this will be available for sale in their

life style stores. For this, "Quicksilver" intends to bring in over 50 media personnel and crew on their own.

The ASP World Qualifying Series, or 'WQS' as it is more known, winds its way through 14 countries across the globe annually, with a rigorous amount of events that test the world's best surfers and ultimately provides a qualification to the elite ASP Top 45. Prize money alone is not the only bounty the surfers will be seeking. The valuable World Qualifying Series ratings points on offer at the event in Sri Lanka will ensure a turnout of surfing's most talented at Arugam Bay.

Up to 188 ASP ranked competitors will be visiting Arugam Bay from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, USA, Hawaii, Spain, France, Japan, South Africa and Brazil. Their performance will be judged on speed, power and a varied repertoire in maneuvers by an international panel of judges as they surf the waves in 4 man heats with 1st and 2nd placing progressing through to the next round of the competition. The international contenders will all be making their mark on competitive surfing history in Sri Lanka and you can look forward to some fantastic surfing action during the event.



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MUSANDAM, A LAND OF MAGIC THREATENED

By Christophe Chellapermal, General Manager, Nomad Ocean Adventures



Shark being sold at the souk. Photo courtesy of Carole Harris

Musandam, located North East of the Emirates is actually part of Oman. It is a land of magic, very wild and cut off from the modern world as very little population live there. Yet contrary to common belief, the environment there is daily threatened and the phenomenon known as “shifting baselines” is part of the everyday life (shifting baselines is defined as “the tendency of people to perceive ocean life as abundant and ocean ecosystems as healthy even though they have slowly and steadily deteriorated”).

Fishermen are the first victims as the stocks are slowly depleting and species at the top of food chain are becoming harder to be seen like dolphins or mantas, which have crucial roles in the ecosystem. The fact that mammals at the top of the chain are disappearing is worrying. No studies yet have determined the causes; however, in the case of the dolphins, I have my reasons to think that their main source of food has become hard to find. Thus, they've decided to seek it somewhere else.

After some months of inquiring in Musandam, I made a shocking discovery. The Strait of Hormuz, the entrance of the Arabian Gulf and the entry point of many schools of fishes departing or returning from migratory trips, has been the fishing grounds of trawlers. They are cruising daily in those waters and are bringing back in their nets, tonnes of fishes of diverse size and species. These trawlers have no restrictions or fishing quotas

and are free to do as they please. To me, this sounds like a major environmental disaster is waiting to happen if nothing is done to restrict those waters. Mammals like dolphins will simply disappear from our coastlines and the entire ecosystem of the Gulf will dramatically suffer for lack of key species in the food chain.

I think that now, more than ever, surveys have to be conducted in Musandam to establish a database of the current biodiversity of marine species. Such a survey is vital for the Gulf because Musandam is a stopover to many underwater species and acts as a lung to the entire Arabian Gulf.

Another worrying fact is the excessive shark fishing practiced all around the Gulf. I have been a resident of the Middle East for the past 20 years and as time goes by, the sharks I commonly see like the grey and black tips, are becoming smaller and smaller by the years. Sharks play a vital role in the ocean as they act as regulators of species and ensure that a balance is kept in the ecosystem. Their main preys are usually sick or hurt marine creatures so great care should be applied when over fishing one of the last predators of the food chain.

Hammerheads have been over fished in the past years and they are becoming almost impossible to spot. It is urgent that local fishermen have quotas to respect even if fishing is their main source of livelihood.

One of the many suggestions that would make a huge difference to the underwater realm is fish farming. If the government promotes fish farming within the fishermen community and offered its support, fewer fishermen would be fishing and the stocks would theoretically start to reproduce.

I would like also to make a call to all those who visit Musandam to act responsibly and clean up behind them. Spring holidays are approaching and after every holiday, the East Coast suffers from heaps of plastic bags and cans left by the users.

I will be organising a clean-up day in Musandam in October and would like to invite all readers to join us to try to make a small difference. To know more about it, check our website at www.discovernomad.com.

**I THINK THAT NOW, MORE
THAN EVER, SURVEYS HAVE
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MUSANDAM TO ESTABLISH
A DATABASE OF THE
CURRENT BIODIVERSITY
OF MARINE SPECIES**

EDA ABU DHABI COMMITTEE KICK-STARTS THE SEASON

By Kathleen Russell (Al Masaoood), EDA Abu Dhabi Coordinator



EDA ADC group

EDA Abu Dhabi is gearing up for an eventful 2006 season! Recently, EDA Abu Dhabi Committee held a meeting hosted by the GASCO Dive Club at Al Rimal Club. Representatives from local dive clubs and retailers who attended included GASCO, Al Masaoood Marine and Engineering, Gulf Marine Sports, Total Dive Club, ADCO Dive Club, Frog Legs Dive Club and EDA's Director of Environment Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi and newly appointed EDA Administrative Assistant Melrose Valencia. Some dive clubs who sent their apologies for not attending included ADMA and ADSAC, both of which are quite active in their diving activities and training.

Much enthusiasm was expressed concerning the 2006 activities. A brief introduction about EDA, its mission statement and a slide show started the meeting. Member benefits were highlighted with many discount offers from various dive operators, airlines, hotels and marine sports retailers. Ibrahim also highlighted the service of a hyperbaric chamber from the Dubai Police for members when it becomes operational. It pays to be an EDA member!

Upcoming activities for EDA Abu Dhabi included Pearl Diving Heritage Trips, underwater and beach cleanup at various locations in Abu Dhabi, monthly talks by expert presenters and a celebration for Earth Day (22nd April). The American Community School will also participate in Earth Day by having an assembly and a talk about protecting the marine environment and learning how marine debris affects the sea and its inhabitants.

Other topics included updates on EDA's Gala Dinner, DMEX 2007, membership and dive centre registration, Reef Check program in UAE, DEMA 2006 visit and Abu Dhabi committee members participating in the general meeting of dive centres to work together to discuss issues related to diving activities and building more safety awareness.

It was an evening of fun and camaraderie amongst the diving community. We look forward to strengthening the ties between the various diving clubs, centres, retailers and environmental organizations. As the PADI motto goes, "we're here to meet people, do things and go places."



EDA ADC at work



EDA ADC at work

ANILAO'S MACRO CHARMS

By Kathleen Russell (Al Masaood Marine & Engineering)
Images by Alistair Russell (EDA Abu Dhabi member)

With less than 3 hours drive from the metropolis of Manila, divers can find tropical Anilao, the Philippine's capital for diving. This close distance of Anilao from Manila has made this small fishing village into a destination for a day, weekend or weeklong hot spot. Most divers learning to dive in Manila are ensured great dive experiences while completing their check out dives there. Unknowingly, these novice divers may not know that Anilao is a haven for macro divers. Dive slowly and look beyond the abundance of colourful reefs and thousands of reef inhabitants; one will discover the hidden beauty of small critters. It takes a sharp local dive guide, (of which there are plenty) to point out hidden life treasures between tiny crevices, the underside of a sea cucumber; in anemones, a soft whip coral or coral rubble. Occasionally divers will encounter on the reefs a cruising reef shark, eagle ray, feeding turtle or schooling chevron barracudas.

Mabini-Tingloy Annual Digital Underwater Shootout (MAD about US)

During our recent trip down to Anilao, some EDA divers were privileged to participate in the 1st Mabini-Tingloy Annual Digital Underwater Shootout (MAD about US) held 18-26th February 2006. The main objectives of the competition were to help promote awareness, understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the underwater world in Mabini and Tingloy (where majority of the best dive sites are located in Anilao), preserve this treasure and help promote Mabini and Tingloy as tourist destinations by improving the operations of all dive operators to meet world-class standards. This was a first for this community to present a unified front and work together with 30 local operators. The skill category included special beginners, intermediate and open. The five shot categories consisted of macro/close up, non-macro/wide angle, abstract, critters and best of show. Over 30 participants entered from all over the world including divers from Abu Dhabi! During the week, avid divers cruised the reefs with their expert dive guides and digital cameras, strobes, wide angle and macro lens, magnifying lens in tote looking for their winning shots. Some intrepid divers even went out at midnight and 4am to seek their claim. Judging by the images submitted, the calibres of photographers were far from novice. During the award gala dinner, the Mayor of Mabini, representatives from the Mabini Tourism Board, the board of judges and the organizers presented an excellent array of entertainment consisting of performances from the local and hip hop dance troupes, musical numbers from the youth groups and an amazing slide show of all the images submitted by the participants. The judges expressed their difficulty in deciding the winners because so many entries were brilliant. Prizes given out were 10,000 pesos (approx.



EDA in the Philippines

USD200) for best of show, trips to Tubbataha (another of the Philippine's outstanding dive destinations in the Sulu Sea) with well-known live aboard operators MY Tristar and Scuba World's Explorer Fleets, accommodation in dive resorts and gift packages. Information on the contest can be found at www.mabini.gov.ph

Common critters on the reef
Some of the common marine life living on the abundant reefs include scorpion fish,

lionfish (dwarf, zebra, spot-fin, white-lined and common), frogfish (painted, giant and spot-fin), common reef octopus, moray eels (spot-faced, yellow-edged, white-mouth), blue ribbon eel and the black juvenile (coloured with a yellow strip on the dorsal side), fields of spotted garden eels, gobies, blennies, shrimps, and nudibranch too many to name. On closer observation and a vigilant dive guide to point them out, one will find a variety of macro critters not accustomed to be found by a typical diver. Looking on the grooves of a barrel sponge, one will find a little inhabitant or two of the hairy pink squat lobster no bigger than a few centimetres. More elusive are the leaf fish, sea moth, mantis shrimp (peacock and giant), flying gurnard, flamboyant cuttlefish, and ornate and robust ghost pipefish. Even tinier macro life includes the pygmy seahorse found on soft coral colonies in deep water and current swept areas with extremely cryptic body shape, colour, and skin texture and only 2cm in size. More cryptic species include the tiny blue-ring octopus, the wonderpus or mimic octopus and hairy and common seahorse. Divers can also encounter crabs galore (arrowhead, boxer, soft-coral, decorator and porcelain), shrimps (harlequin, saw blade, commensal, uncommon periclemenes living in anemones, mushroom corals and bubble corals), orange hairy orang-utan crab and crinoid squat lobsters. No wonder Anilao is aptly named the favourite macro hotspot by professional underwater photographers.

SOME POPULAR DIVE SITES

KIRBY'S ROCK (1 m-33m) is a rock with colourful coral cover including soft and leathery coral, crinoids, feather stars and plenty of reef fish. It is also home to several giant frogfish and common octopi.

CATHEDRAL (5m-30m) is a marine park sanctuary teeming with reef fish like sergeant majors, parrotfish, and surgeonfish. It's one of the most famous sites where fish feeding is a regular activity so the fish do not shy away from divers.

BAHURA (5m-30m) a sloped and wall dive generally with strong currents. Divers can encounter schooling barracudas and

snappers. Visibility is usually good for wide-angle photography. Keep a lookout for common octopus and a variety of moray eels.

BEATRICE ROCKS (3m-24m) is a submerged reef behind Sombrero Island. It's a great site to dive amongst thousands of fairy basslets and beautiful anthias especially when there is a current. At deeper depths, there are huge barrel sponges and colourful gorgonian sea fans where one can find arrowhead crabs and a variety of colourful nudibranch.

SOMBERO ISLAND (5m-20m) is another great site for more experience divers, as the surface can be a bit choppy. It's a gradual slope similar to Beatrice Rock with huge table corals and barrel sponges. This is where we found an orange hairy orang-utan crab hiding in a mushroom coral.

MAINIT POINT (5m-30m) is a gentle sloped site, which can have strong currents running through. As a result, some pelagics and reef sharks can be spotted. We also encountered a school of barracudas here. Blue ribbon eels and black coloured juvenile males can be found in shallower depths. Good visibility allows for great wide-angle photography.

TWIN ROCKS (5m-15m) has a gentle slope located just off the shoreline. There is a capsized barge at 10-15m where plenty of black surgeonfish are found. The reef fish are not shy as they are regularly fed by passing divers. It is also home to protected giant clams.

DEAD POINT AND ARTHUR'S ROCK (5m-20m) are near Twin Rocks with gentle slopes covered with soft corals. A variety of nudibranch can be found on the sandy bottom or small coral heads. We found a tasselled scorpion fish lying on the sandy bottom.

BASURA (1m-25m) translated means "garbage" in Spanish. It is a macro haven for photographers as all the bizarre and sometimes humorous-looking critters can be found here. It's a gentle slope with coarse sand littered with people's abandoned garbage. Dive slowly and look closely and one will find juvenile wasp fish, sea moths, ghost pipefish, big-fin squid, small thorny seahorse, juvenile dwarf lionfish, lots of dragnets and wonderpus. It's a muck diving paradise comparable to other legendary sites from Lembeh Strait, Indonesia, Mabul Island, Malaysia or Kimbe, Papua New Guinea.

There are more dive sites in Anilao including Dive and Trek, Layag-Layag, Devil's Point, Sepok Wall, Daryl Laut, Eagle Point, Koala and others that are waiting to be discovered.

HOW TO GET THERE

Most airlines fly direct to Manila (from Dubai and Abu Dhabi). Anilao is 124km south of Manila and is just a 3-hour drive. We stayed at Aqua Reef Club and they arranged airport transfer direct to/from the resort. Other transport includes the local favourite - the colourful jeepney, a multi passenger vehicle.

CURRENCY

Currency is Philippine Peso and current exchange rate is approximately Php 52 to USD1. US Dollars and major international credit cards are also widely accepted.

DIVING SEASON

Diving is best from October to June when seas are calmer. Monsoon (rainy season) starts around July until August. Tropical depressions and typhoons are more common during this period. However, divers can dive year round rain or shine unless the weather is really bad. Most of the dive sites are suitable for all levels of divers; however, some sites are deeper and have stronger currents and suitable for more experienced divers. Water temperature ranged from 24C -29C and 3mm-5mm wetsuits are recommended during the cooler months like December to March.

DIVE OPERATORS

There are a few comfortable dive resorts. We have been staying at Aqua Reef Club. They offer full professional dive services and have friendly staff, comfortable accommodation and sumptuous international and local cuisines and offer other services like relaxation massage and footbath. We spent the best part of most days under the swaying coconut palms, sitting on the open terrace and enjoying the setting sun in tropical bliss. Other dive operators in the area include Club Ocellaris, Dive Solana, Vistamar, Dive and Trek, Balai Resort and Eagle Point Resort. Book early as these resorts are normally booked during weekends.

AQUA REEF CLUB

Tel: +63-2 895 7932

Website: www.aquareefclub.com

Email: booking@aquareefclub.com

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Taal Lake and Volcano are areas of interest north of Anilao. The volcano lies inside the crater of the lake due to repeated eruptions. Visitors can arrange to go horseback riding on the volcano hillsides to the lake within the volcano crater. Residents living on the island volcano act as local guides to visit the dormant and active cones.

We hope more EDA divers will have the opportunity to visit the Philippines! With over 7,100 islands, friendly faces and a rich heritage, there are still a lot of adventures to be discovered both in land and sea. "Mabuhay" (a common Filipino greeting meaning "Long lived")!



Resort



Bangka Sunset



Anemone Shrimp



Reef



Sea Horse



Frog Fish



Hairy Squat Lobster



Ghost Pipe Fish

EDA AROUND THE WORLD

EDA HERITAGE DEPARTMENT VISITS KUWAIT



SCHOOL KIDS VISIT EDA



EDA's Juma-a Bin Thaleth explaining scuba to kids



Kids in EDA



Juma-a Bin Thaleth posing with school kids



School kids with EDA's popular Fish Poster

EDA VOLUNTEERS TRAIN UP FOR REEF MONITORING PROGRAM

By Aspen Aman, Reef Monitoring Program member

POLISHING OLD SKILLS AND LEARNING NEW ONES

Volunteers from Emirates Diving Association are wrapping up training necessary to ramp up the Reef Monitoring Program (RMP) for 2006-2007. The group has been polishing their underwater skills in familiar areas such as peak performance buoyancy and underwater navigation, while acquiring the techniques specifically designed for reef monitoring such as fish, invertebrate and substrate surveys. The training includes several weekends of intensive classroom study on fish and coral identification as well as Reef Check monitoring techniques.



PART OF REEF CHECK'S GLOBAL MARINE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The EDA's reef monitoring program constitutes local participation in ongoing global reef conservation efforts through Reef Check (www.reefcheck.org), a volunteer conservation organization active in 82 countries and territories worldwide since its founding in 1996. The RMP is structured along Reef Check's rigorous guidelines and all data collected during RMP activities at the monitoring sites in the UAE will be sent to Reef Check for inclusion in worldwide conservation studies and efforts.



Because the training for the core volunteers is quite demanding in terms of time and skill acquisition, the first phase of the RMP has focused on bringing the volunteers up to the skill levels

necessary to implement the program in a scientific and sustainable way. In order to ensure that data collected on monitoring dives are scientifically valid and consistent, Reef Check requires participating teams to include a team scientist. The RMP is fortunate to have not one but two scientists, marine biologist Donna Meyrick and environmental scientist Zeina Jokadar, on the team to guarantee quality data collection. Other team members include Ernst Van Der Poll (Reef Check's coordinator for the program), Moe Bitar, Leena Abbas, Hani Macki, Manuel Beck, Andrew El Zein, Lucy Meadows and Aspen Aman. Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi provides coordination and funding assistance through EDA's full range of resources.

Since the training geared up in September 2005, the RMP has had intensive classroom study in fish and coral identification as well as training in PADI's Project A.W.A.R.E. and the National Geographic Dive Explorer program. The volunteers have learned about region-specific "indicator species" whose presence (or absence) on a reef provide an accurate measure of the overall health of the reef environment. These indicator species range from specific types of corals, fish, turtles and other marine life and vary according to the geographical location of the reef being monitored. Some of the indicator species specific to UAE waters include the orange-spotted grouper, Arabian Butterfly fish, parrot fish, various coral species as well as invertebrates such as crowns-of-thorn, pencil urchins and tritons. Monitoring teams must also track damage and coral bleaching, declines in fish populations and degradation of the reef's health caused by tourist diving, industrial/sewage pollution, over fishing and illegal fishing methods.

BRINGING LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS INTO THE CONSERVATION PICTURE

The ultimate objective of the RMP is for the cadre of trained EDA volunteers to work with a number of high schools in the UAE so that students interested in marine conservation can do the actual reef monitoring and report their findings to international NGOs, the UAE Ministry of Environment as well as the United Nations Environmental Programme. Participation criteria for the high schools are quite stringent; each qualifying high school must have a science department, an instructor committed to institutionalizing the school's participation as well as identifying and recruiting students interested in marine conservation issues. A specific number of students from each participating school will be trained as open water divers through Pavilion Dive Center (an active and essential supporter of the RMP). Each school will be paired up with one or more of the RMP core volunteers to coordinate the school's monitoring dives on the reefs designated for the RMP program. The RMP will also work to ensure that monitoring of the reefs is done on a consistent and sustainable timetable so that data is provided to the Ministry of Environment and Reef Check in a timely manner. The RMP will make presentations to participating schools before the end of the current academic year, laying the groundwork necessary to start the student monitoring teams' training with the beginning of the new school year.

EAST COAST FOCUS OF MONITORING EFFORTS

The EDA's reef monitoring efforts will focus on two reefs currently being mapped by the RMP and Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre on the East Coast of the country. Through EDA's and the Research Centre's ongoing efforts to increase protected reef areas in UAE waters, one of the reefs to be monitored is located in an area between Dibba and Khor Fakkan. EDA is focusing its reef monitoring efforts on the East Coast of the country since the area is experiencing rapid development and increasing pressures upon the natural marine environment. By getting baseline data on the state of the reefs off the East Coast, EDA's RMP will provide invaluable data to the UAE Ministry of Environment and Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre as well as the international organizations (UNEP, Reef Check and others). These monitoring activities will help ensure federal and international policies are designed to mitigate future damage to the reefs and enable them to recover from damage already incurred.



The Marine Environment Research Centre has donated space for an EDA office at their extensive facilities in Dibba and invited EDA members interested in doing conservation dives and other activities in Dibba to make use of the equipment at the centre. Once the EDA has hired a part-time employee to staff the Dibba office, EDA members wishing to help in conservation activities can coordinate visits to Dibba through the EDA main office in Dubai.

CREATING ARTIFICIAL REEFS PART OF OVERALL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

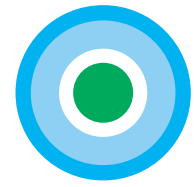
In addition to the actual reef monitoring activities, the RMP is working closely with the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre to plant 21 specially designed reef balls and 11 dhows in waters in current and expanded marine sanctuaries off the East Coast. The reef balls, donated by the National Cement Factory in Dubai, are designed to provide a foundation for new soft and hard coral growth and provide safe fish breeding areas as well as sanctuaries for a variety of marine wildlife. The composite material for the reef balls was perfected after six months testing in various depths and water conditions off the coast of Dubai. The dhows, cleaned and prepared for sinking in the marine sanctuary, have been donated by HH Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed al Sharqi, Ruler of Fujairah, to enhance the waters off the East Coast of the country. The reef balls and dhows will be transported to the sites of the new artificial reefs by a barge and equipment loaned by seafood company Asmak, and with the assistance of the port authorities of Dibba port.



The RMP will be inviting interested EDA members to volunteer to assist with this important project. Anyone interested in volunteering for the artificial reef activities should email Aspen Aman (aspenyemen@yahoo.com) or Leena Abbas (leenaabbas@hsbc.com) so that the RMP can coordinate and finalize this activity with the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre.

Look for reports of the RMP in upcoming issues of the EDA newsletter.

THE EDA'S REEF MONITORING PROGRAM CONSTITUTES LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN ONGOING GLOBAL REEF CONSERVATION EFFORTS THROUGH REEF CHECK



SUBIOS 2006: PROMOTING SEYCHELLES AS A WORLD-LEADING DIVE DESTINATION

The Seychelles archipelago's 115 islands, lie spread like sparkling emeralds over two million square kilometres of azure water just south of the equator. The granitic islands cluster around the principal island of Mahé while the more numerous coral islands extend in a gleaming arc towards the East African coast. Most remain virgin worlds. All remain sanctuaries to some of the rarest and most exotic plant and animal life in the known world.

A dive into the ocean reveals that the breathtaking beauty of the Seychelles islands is certainly equaled, if not surpassed, beneath the waves.

The Seychelles water-worlds are a living aquarium for diverse and spectacular forms of marine life. Dazzling coral reef fish, turtles, giant rays and visits by gentle whale sharks, promise a kaleidoscope of entertainment and adventure in unspoiled venues.

These include the 'Ennerdale' wreck, magnificent boulders that are home to groupers, stingrays and sharks while sorties to the Outer Islands promise impressive wall and cave dives and encounters with the inhabitants of the 'Big Blue'.

A selection of accredited shore and marine-based dive centers offer everything from one-day introductory courses to annual instructor development courses – and with inimitable Creole flair.

Whatever your preference, in Seychelles waters, your dreams of the ultimate diving holiday will be realized.

Since 1989, the Seychelles' Underwater Film and Image Festival, SUBIOS, has played an important role in showcasing Seychelles' amazing underwater world and extraordinary marine heritage. This year, it was held between the 6th and 12th of March, with an array of activities taking place throughout the islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue.

This year, the festival commenced with an opening ceremony at the International Conference Centre where Vice President Joseph Belmont, in his address, stressed the importance of tourism to the national economy. A public voting on entries for the video and photography contests and a SUBIOS-dedicated evening at Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Hotel followed.

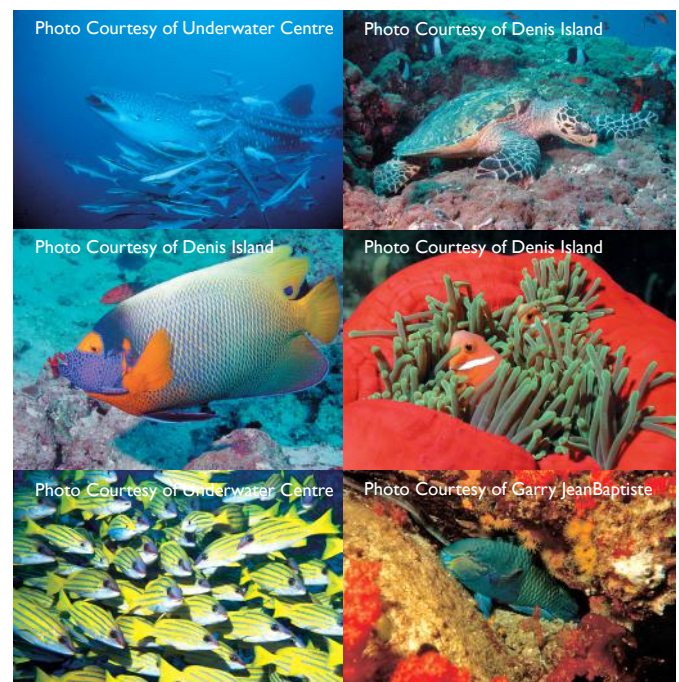
In keeping with the strong SUBIOS tradition of sensitizing the country's youth to the conservation of Seychelles' marine environment ecosystems, Art and Creative contests in schools were held on Tuesday, 7th of March. The Minister for Education, Mr. Danny Faure, attended the opening and award-giving ceremony. Other school and SUBIOS-related activities that were held on each of the principal islands continued through the week. These included intro dives and presentations by guest speakers Mr. Tony Baskeyfield, Mr. Edward Snidjers, Mr. David Rowat, Mr. Olivier Dugornay, Ms. Glynis Sanders and Mr. Leo Hoevers. Local dive centres were once again prominent in hosting a variety of events and exhibiting that special Creole touch.

SUBIOS also hosted a number of foreign journalists this year to savour the thrill of diving in Seychelles and to enjoy the full range of SUBIOS activities that culminated with the unveiling of the specially decorated children's playground on the 12th of March. Despite a slow start, due in part to the weather, which was less than kind on Saturday with frequent rain storms, the schedule of activities went ahead with the official opening of the SUBIOS Garden. This was followed by the SUBIOS Man & Woman Event which was played out in 4 stages; swimming, cycling, running and canoeing and which was hotly contested by 17 competitors.

Another new SUBIOS event was the 'La Buse' Virtual Treasure Hunt, which celebrated the fabulous treasure claimed to have been hidden at Bel Ombre, Mahé, by the 18th century French pirate, Olivier du Vasseur. Kenwyn House sponsored the stunning, golden, diamond-studded double cross.

On the last day, Central Victoria came alive with the sights and sounds of the festival that featured a magnificent procession of 16 school floats, each highlighting a different aspect of the 2006 SUBIOS theme, 'The Gardens Below'. Live bands, various stalls that sold local produce and children's face-painting stations accompanied this exciting spectacle.

SUBIOS ended with an awarding ceremony for the festival's various competitions. In his closing remarks, Minister Ronny Jumeau from the Ministry of the Environment highlighted the importance of maintaining Seychelles' unique marine heritage intact for future generations. Minister Jumeau also introduced the 2007 SUBIOS theme: "Our Ocean Cousins" which celebrates the cetacean family of whales, dolphins and dugongs.



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UNDERWATER CURRENTS



Andrew Jubber

This page is dedicated specifically to controversial diving or environmental issues which members feel strongly about that may not have another place to be shared. Share your opinions with the UAE diving community and you may galvanize your fellow divers into action.

(Editor's Note: EDA responded to this comment by requesting specific details regarding the incidents so EDA can file a report for submission to the proper authorities if violations are substantiated. Andrew has asked the help of the fellow East Coast dive centers to record past incidents and report future ones.)

OPPOSING INTERESTS

By Andrew Jubber, Freestyle Divers

"There is a tour company that transports endless amounts of uncaring snorkellers to and from Dibba Rock. It uses a banana float attached to the back of a motorboat to increase efficiency, and does it at full speed with little regard for divers. I have seen many instances such as coral collecting, picking up turtles and walking on the island by their guests. With the amount of guests this tour company brings, it will not be long before Dibba Rock is polluted with broken and dying coral.

One time, I confronted the boat driver after receiving a complaint from Ryan Todd at Al Boom Diving and his reply was somewhere in the lines of "why are they so far away from their boats, I should not have to look out for them". My blood boiled, was he too stubborn to take an extra few minutes being cautious, or was he willing to seriously injure or even kill a diver just so he could get another boat load out before the guests had to leave.

Our numerous complaints to the General Manager of the hotel have not been addressed because of the extra revenue this tour company brings, and our numerous complaints to the tour operator have been laughed at because he knows the General Manager is on his side.

The "Marine Reservant" boat tries his best to control this tour company but they just do not listen. We have tried everything from reasoning to arguing and still, nothing happened."

Gala Dinner 2004



Gala Dinner 2005



A LOOK IN PICTURES: **EDA GALA DINNER**

2004 and 2005

EDA holds a gala dinner annually to celebrate the work of the Emirates Diving Association, the contributions of our sponsors, and the diving and sport community of the UAE. In past years, we've had interesting speakers, given away great prizes and danced the night away. This year's annual gala dinner will be held on May 11, 2006 at 7:00pm at the Emirates Towers' Godolphin Ballroom and we expect it to be even better than in years past. There are many prizes to be won, including flight tickets to Sri Lanka and Thailand and diving holidays in Seychelles, Musandam and East Africa. Get your tickets soon - they won't last long.

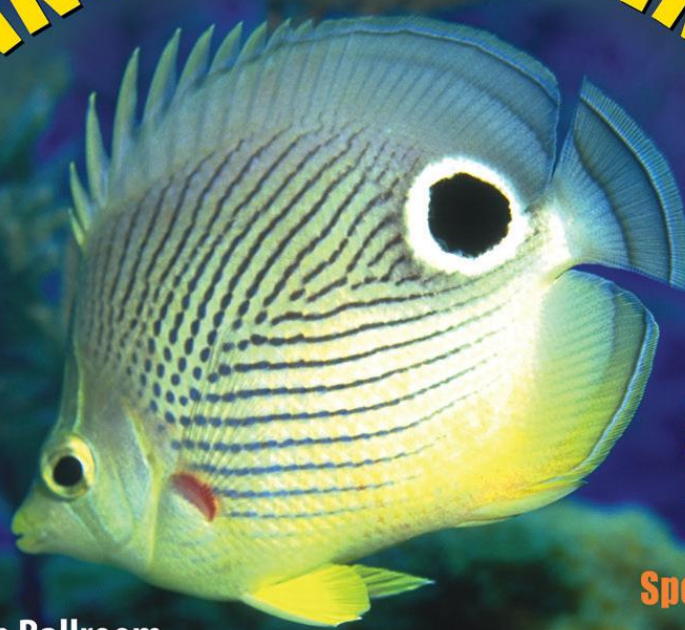


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UPCOMING EVENTS

MONTHLY MEMBER TALKS

Monthly Member Talks is a discussion series on topics that EDA believes will be of interest to its members. Led by individuals who are experts in their respective fields, the talks aim to provide members the opportunity to gain knowledge on topics relevant to the diving community.

EDA 5th GALA DINNER

EDA is holding its annual Gala Dinner on 11th May 2006, 7:00 PM, at the Godolphin Ballroom at Emirates Towers Hotel. This is a yearly celebration of EDA's achievements and a way to thank its sponsors, partners and members for their support.

REEF MONITORING PROJECT (RMP)

The RMP, the flagship project of EDA, is part of the local participation in ongoing global reef conservation efforts through Reef Check (www.reefcheck.org), the international volunteer conservation organization.

The RMP group's main focus is to monitor the health of corals in the UAE. Interested EDA members who would like to volunteer for RMP can email Aspen Aman (aspenyemen@yahoo.com) or Leena Abbas (leenaabbas@hsbc.com).

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Head of the Technical Committee Mr. Omar Al Huraiz

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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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