



EDA
جمعية الإمارات للغوص
Emirates Diving Association

ISSUE 4 VOL. 2
DECEMBER 2006

DIVERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Clean Up Arabia 2006



Dibba, Fujairah Marine Reserves



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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 March 2007. Send all articles/comments to Head Office edadiver@emirates.net.ae.



22



12



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Dear Members,

2006 has been a rather hectic but very interesting and productive year for EDA. For an organization which relies heavily on the support of its members and sponsors, EDA managed to accomplish quite a few things this year.

First is EDA's recommitment to ensure that the local dive industry is safe, professional and growing. This was done by holding general meetings (four, so far) with dive businesses and clubs to discuss relevant concerns affecting the industry. From these meetings, important issues pertaining to registration, insurance, emergency, safety, independent instructors, Coast Guard and tourism, among others, have been discussed. One significant outcome from these meetings is the creation of the EDA Safety Committee which was tasked to help promote safe recreational diving in the UAE. EDA also devoted an entire issue of its quarterly newsletter to help promote the UAE dive centers/clubs/retailers by coming out with the EDA DIVE UAE GUIDE in August. EDA has also laid the groundwork for DMEX 2007 which aims to promote the UAE as a diving destination. Although some concerns are still being addressed, EDA will try its very best to serve and promote the local dive industry.

Second is EDA's continuing environmental effort to help in the conservation of the UAE marine resources. EDA signed an MOU with the new Minister of Environment and Water early this year to continue the work already been done by EDA in cooperation with the Dibba Marine Environment Research Centre. Plans include the dropping of more reef balls and dhows to extend the marine reserve. Conservation efforts also start by having the necessary knowledge so EDA also attended various symposia to disseminate information to EDA members through this newsletter. One of these is the "Symposium on the

A BUSY YEAR

Status and Conservation of Dugongs of the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean" attended by EDA Abu Dhabi Coordinator Kathleen Russell in May. Kathleen will also report in this issue on the "First Regional Marine Conservation Forum" that we attended in September.

One major awareness activity of EDA is the recently-conducted Clean Up Arabia. The 11th anniversary was the biggest so far with almost a thousand volunteers across the Emirates and from Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, joining forces to clean the beach and dive sites. It was heartening to see many new members joining EDA for this sole purpose. Thank you, once again, to all those who participated.

Another new found mission of EDA is dive-for-a-cause. We started this in 2005 when we dived in Thailand to help promote diving in the country after it was devastated by the tsunami in December 2004. We did it this year by going to Sri Lanka in March. The UAE is very fortunate in terms of tourism and we are lucky to be here. This is our way of giving back to a particular community who is in need of diving promotions.

EDA is not all about diving but also about having fun. We had our Gala Dinner in May this year and we are planning to hold an EDA Social Night this December. The Social Night will be an informal get together for our new members and the other members to thank them for joining EDA and to let them know what is in store for them and have the chance to discuss various issues and participate in different activities.

I hope everyone enjoyed their Eid Al Fitter; and I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year and Eid Adha Mubarak.

Eco Regards,

Ibrahim N. Al-Zu'bi

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The Dive Middle East Exhibition 2007



In association with the Emirates Diving Association (EDA), Dive Middle East Exhibition (DMEX) will be held alongside the Dubai International Boat Show 2007 (DIBS). The show 'within a show' will see exhibitors display products on a floating exhibition area within the marina display section of DIBS, as well as an interactive diving demonstration platform.

Exhibits on display will range from the latest diving equipment, diving specialties as well as courses and services offered by clubs and associations. Added attractions organised by the EDA will include live demonstrations and interactive trial dives aimed at educating children and dive enthusiasts.

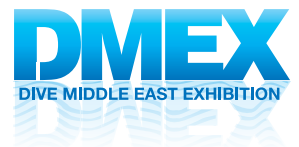
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SILHOUETTE – PURE NATURE

Article written by Ruth Stephens, PADI Course Director



Having travelled all over the world I thought I had seen just about everything when it comes to nature... but I was wrong.

It was the end of October, when I was taking a walk on the most beautiful beach in Silhouette, Seychelles, chatting with my friend Daniela. We were involved in a conversation and suddenly I stopped her because an amazing thing happened. A large hawksbill turtle crawled out of the sea. We sat down on the beach to watch it because we figured that she wanted to lay eggs. I had no idea how hard it is for a turtle to do that. Just to climb up on the beach seemed like an extremely tiring process, never mind trying to find a spot where to lay her eggs. She finally decided she had found the right place and started digging and we were afraid to move because we didn't want to scare her away.

We crawled on our stomachs close to the turtle, took some pictures and eventually decided to leave because it was getting dark.

What a great experience that was and this is something you might happen to see if you come to this beautiful, unspoilt island.



Most of you probably read the article about the Seychelles in the August issue and you might wonder why there is another article in this issue.

The reason is, that we have to offer a lot more than just diving. Silhouette is a very special place. If you enjoy diving and nature on land, then this is the right place for you.

Though just 45 minutes by boat or 15 minutes by helicopter from the main island of Mahé, this is a world apart as it is the world's ultimate tropical paradise.

We can take you diving and show you amazing fish life. The waters around Silhouette were declared a Marine National Park in 1987. Almost nobody has been diving here for the past 5 years and therefore the marine life is abundant. Ask Ibrahim and his group from EDA who were here in October and dived with us. They were raving about mating octopuses, something that you might only see once in a lifetime.

Silhouette is a granitic island and you will see huge granite boulders under water that are surrounded by thousands of fish.



Most of our dive sites are minutes away by boat and we can show you a multitude of tropics, lots of turtles, large families of napoleon, humphead parrot fish, lion fish, moray eels, eagle rays and sharks. You might want to stop once in a while and you will find yourself surrounded by large schools of jacks.



You will be able to snorkel with whale sharks if you have a chance to visit in September or October. They can be found in the waters around Mahé and we can offer you this wonderful experience in combination with a helicopter flight. You will have whale shark guarantee because "Microlights" are used to spot them.

If you need a break from diving or you are visiting with a non-diving partner, then we take you on a great hiking tour. For starters we offer a Sightseeing Discovery Tour which is a lot of fun. We visit giant tortoises that you can pet like a cat. You scratch their head and their body is like an airbag. They lift their body off the ground and stretch out their long necks and look at you like E.T. They are like puppies who want to be cuddled. These animals are part of the Seychelles Giant Tortoise Conservation Project. It is a captive-breeding program aimed at saving the Seychelles

giant tortoises from extinction. Ron Gerlach and his wife run the Nature Protection Trust Information Centre and Laboratory and he can explain everything to you about the tortoises and if you are lucky you might even be able to see one hatch.



On this tour you will learn about the history of the island and see some amazing beaches and rainforests. On your Discovery Tour you will find out about the life of the family Dauban who lived on the island and owned it from 1860-1960. We visit their old plantation house, called "Grande Case" which is under restoration at the moment to become a Creole Restaurant and a museum. Very interesting to see is the Mausoleum where the Dauban family was buried. This cast-iron neo-classical tomb is a copy of the church of "La Madeleine" in Paris.



Silhouette is formed of granite some 63 million years old, with amazing beaches, unexplored tropical rainforest, 3 mountains, with the highest being Mount Dauban (740m) and it's one of

the lushest places in the world. Very unique for the Seychelles are endemic palm trees, such as Coco de Mer, Vakwa Parasol, Lattanyen Milpat, Palmis, Kapisen and Bois Rouge. If you want to see more of the beautiful vegetation, we recommend a jungle walk in combination with snorkelling and a nice lunch on a white beach.



Our Diving and Activity Center called Eco Center is a PADI 5 Star Gold Palm Resort and is located at Labriz, a 5 Star Plus Resort which is part of the Universal Group who have several resorts in the Maldives. Labriz is the only resort on the island with lovely villas, some even with their own pool, either with a mountain view or a sea view. For your dining experience you can choose from 5 different restaurants. The Spa blends into the nature and offers you the most extraordinary treatments ever. If you want to learn more about their accommodation and facilities have a look at: www.labriz-seychelles.com.

The ECO CENTER, a large facility of 300m2, offers you and your family diving, snorkelling, hiking and water sports such as hobie cats, sea kayaks, pedal boats with sun roof and even a clear glass kayak. Have a chat and a drink with your dive buddies on our terrace after a great day of water sports activities.

Our dive boat comfortably holds 20 divers and it will take you to most dive sites within a few minutes. For your safety, we have first aid and Oxygen and SMB's on board.

Apart from taking you on one-tank or back-to-back dives in the morning or afternoon, we offer a full day diving excursion to one of Mahé's Marine Parks, with a BBQ on the beach. Night diving and night snorkelling are also on our program.

If you would like to have your own boat and your own Instructor, you can book a Private Charter with us.

We have a great retail shop where you will find all the goodies a diver must have, plus a lot of other articles such as beach wear, jewellery, sunglasses, postcards and much more.

The rental department is equipped with 35 sets of complete brand new Cressi Sub equipment, 100 tanks, Suunto computers and cameras for rent.

Our 4 new Bauer compressors will deliver your air and Nitrox and there is no additional charge for Nitrox.

We even have a Decompression Chamber just to make sure that your safety is ensured.

A German doctor specialized in dive medicine is on duty day and night.

If you want to learn more about diving, you can choose from our long list of PADI courses and specialities. Our multi-lingual PADI Master Instructors are highly experienced and if you enjoy U/W photography or U/W filming, talk to Lorenzo who is our expert U/W cameraman. He can make a great custom made DVD for you. Actually, he is also a marine biologist and if you want to learn more about the marine life here, you are invited to his marine biology presentations that he runs twice weekly. Being a biologist he can also teach you a lot about our flora and fauna on the island.



After enjoying a full day of activities with us, you might want to try the Spa for relaxation.

If you want to know more about Eco Center and Labriz, please contact us: Daniela Pobuda and Dirk Lawrenz.
eco.center@labriz-seychelles.com

By the way, if you want to know what happened to the turtles eggs... Just come and visit, you might be lucky and see them hatch.



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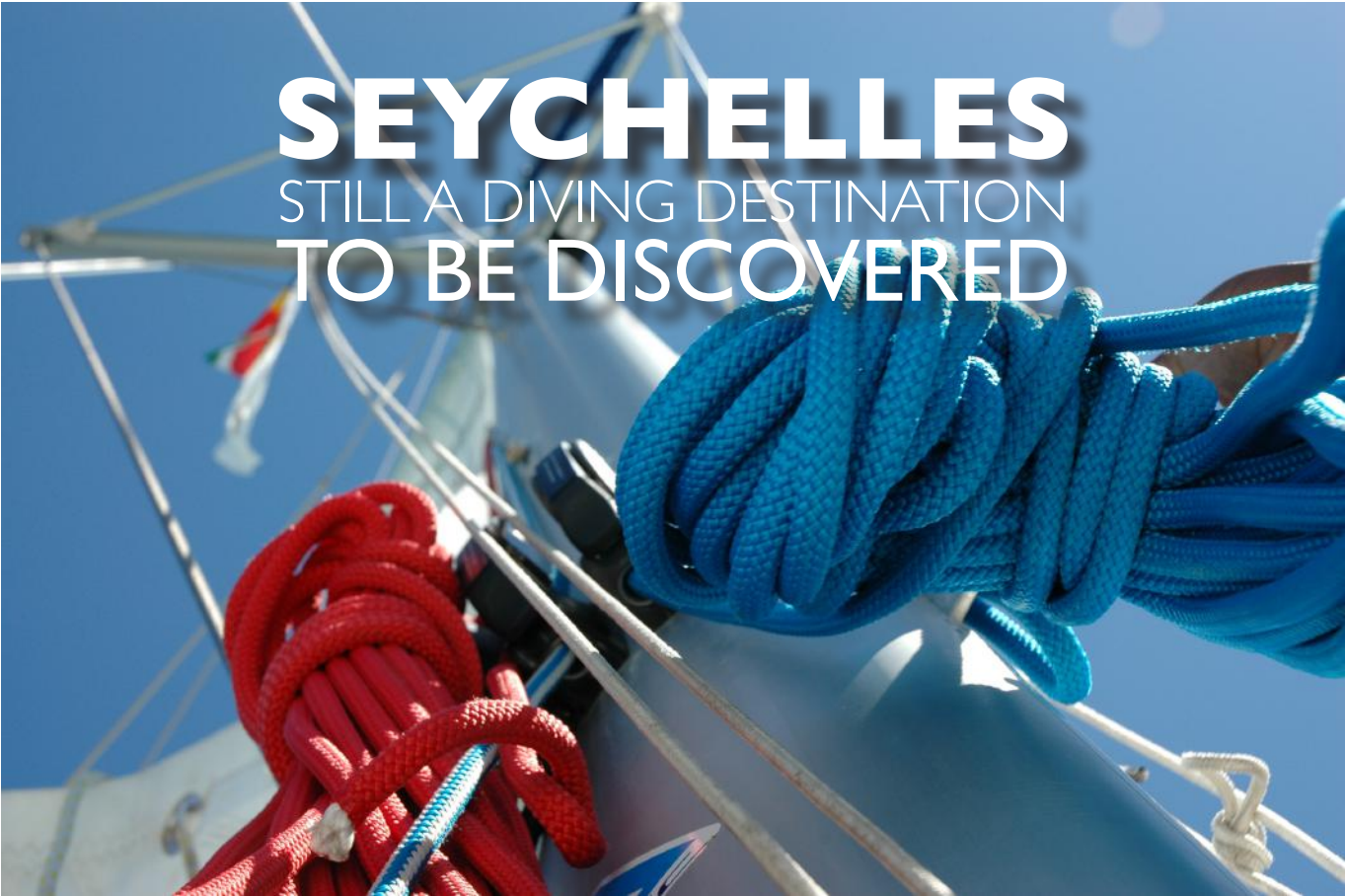
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SEYCHELLES

STILL A DIVING DESTINATION TO BE DISCOVERED

Photo by Ally Landes, Dream Yacht Charter

With 115 islands scattered across the Indian Ocean between 4° and 10° south of the Equator, Seychelles offers diverse and impressive diving opportunities. The Inner Islands, remains of a submerged mountain range, rest on a shallow plateau with prolific marine life and excellent PADI diving facilities available to access a multitude of dive sites. The Outer Islands to the south of the archipelago are all coral line or sand cays and mainly uninhabited, presenting the experienced diver with excellent opportunities to explore where few have gone before.

NO SEASON

Diving is possible all year round but is governed by an island's position and the prevailing winds. Generally speaking, the best conditions for both the Inner and Outer Islands are in the calm periods, April-May and October-November, when the water temperature can rise to 29°C and offers excellent (up to 30 metres) visibility. From December to March, the north-west winds blow but conditions remain much the same as in the calm periods, with the exception of greater surface movement and some localised turbidity. From June to September the winds are stronger and blow south-easterly. Visibility and temperature may thus drop during August with water temperatures of around 26°C.

THE INNER ISLANDS OFFER PROLIFIC FISH LIFE

With 43 Inner Islands to choose from, variety is the order of the day. All of these northerly islands offer impressive granite reef locations where the sculptured rocks can be covered with soft corals and sponges, and fish life is prolific, due to the archipelago's isolation and also strict conservation rules. Wreck dives are available in some areas but only the islands to the south have wall dives, drop-off dives and drift diving opportunities as well.

The Inner Islands' marine life reveals an abundance of fish even on shallow inshore reefs and features different types of Butterfly fish and Angel fish, Soldier fish, Squirrel fish and Sweepers among many others. The island reefs are also havens for many invertebrates including Octopus, Spiny Lobster and a plethora of Nudibranchs, such as the Spanish Dancer.

Sites with regular current flows support fan corals and colorful tree coral formations while more remote sites shelter the larger fish species, such as the Napoleon Wrasse, Giant Grouper, Reef Sharks and Ribbon-tailed Stingrays. Most spectacular are the plankton-eating Whale Sharks found all year around the Inner Islands, with peak sightings in August, and October through January.

Based at Baie Ste Anne on Praslin, the Bleu Marine Dive Center is ideally located to discover the best sites in the Praslin / La Digue area. More than 20 sites are accessible in less than 15 mins with our 30' boat accommodating up to 16 divers. You can even experience to dive with dozens of grey reef sharks at Marianne island.

Being a subsidiary of Dream Yacht Charter, the largest yacht charter and cruise company in Seychelles, Bleu Marine can also offer to discover Seychelles aboard a comfortable catamaran with diving rendez vous organised every day. Some of the boats are fully equipped for diving including compressors and the crew includes a dive instructor.

A cruise aboard a catamaran is the best way and sometimes the unique way to discover the uninhabited Outer Islands. Every month the 82' catamaran Sualiga (25 m) – the largest amongst the Dream Yacht fleet – leaves Mahé for the beautiful and unspoilt Amirantes, the ideal destination for divers. The 11 days /



Photo by Loïc Bonnet



Photos by Ivan Ramos



Photo by Peter Mainka

10 nights cruise starts at 1515 € per person full board. Families can benefit from discounted rates.

THE OUTER ISLANDS: UNSPOILT PARADISE

Marine life around the relatively isolated Outer Islands tends to be even more prolific, with frequent sightings of many of the larger grouper species, particularly the spotted Potato Bass as well as Grey Reef, Silver Tip, Nurse Sharks and the occasional Hammerhead Shark.

A number of rare exotics have been identified from this area such as the African Pygmy Angelfish thought to exist only in small numbers of places including in easy diving depths off Astove. The cartoon-like Yellow Rubber Lipped Sweetlips is another firm favorite while elusive Long-Nosed Hawkfish can easily be found in most Gorgonian fan areas.

Outer Island diving is rich and varied, featuring everything from mini-walls and canyons to migrating Manta Rays, numerous wreck sites and some of the finest Gorgonian fans in the Indian Ocean. Diving on Aldabra's terraced walls is dramatic and Green Turtles are common both in water and on their habitual pilgrimages up the beach to nest. The Cosmoledo atoll offers huge hard coral bommies with 3 metre Gorgonian fans and massive barrel sponges all under the watchful guard of inquisitive Potato Bass.

Astove's settlement reef presents another awe-inspiring wall dive whose reef top is incised with crevasses and caves and boasts a large resident Green Turtle population. Dive depths vary, ranging from 8 to 20 metres for inshore sites and up to depths of 40 metres for dives offshore.

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SEYCHELLES SMOOTH

Written by Beth Rodabaugh

Photo by Joanna Thornton



Beth Rodabaugh

We recently took an amazing trip to the Seychelles Islands as part of an Emirates Diving Association trip. EDA promotes eco-friendly diving and this trip offered us a peek into the amazing diversity of the Seychelles Islands.

The Seychelles is a unique destination with 20 national parks and reserves and two UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites. The numerous marine national parks also offer as much diversity as those on land. In partnership with the Seychelles Tourism Board, 12 EDA members, mostly with media background, flew to the Seychelles to learn more about the islands and its eco-tourism.

PARTICULARS

The Seychelles Islands are located in the western Indian Ocean just south of the

equator and off the eastern coast of Africa. This archipelago of 115 islands covers roughly 1,400,000 kilometers. The Islands seem to be in the early stage of tourism, which is great news for visitors: the islands have little crime, are clean and residents are welcoming. This is a wonderful place for a relaxing vacation on beautiful white sand beaches or taking advantage of all the activities Seychelles have to offer.

The Seychellois have deep roots in the European, African and Asian cultures with a strong French influence even though they were ruled by Britain for nearly 200 years. The Seychellois gained independence from Britain in 1976.

Mahé, the principal island, is the most populated with approximately 70,000 residents, most of who live near the capital city of Victoria. Praslin is the next most populated island with about 9,000 residents. Most all native Seychellois speak and write Creole although English and French are widely spoken throughout the islands.

ON THE MOVE

The eight day itinerary was jam-packed with events from scuba diving to bird watching.

In our eight days we made seven dives, visited land tortoises on Curieuse Island, sailed to Aride Bird Reserve to view Magpie Robins and Blue Pigeons, and toured Maison de Coco (the Coconut Museum) on Mahé and Vallée de Mai,

a UNESCO World Heritage Site, on Praslin.

We dove in crystal blue seas with spectacular underwater vistas off Mahé and Praslin. The visibility was impressive as we dove with sting rays, moray eels, hawksbill turtles and brightly colored schools of fish. On one dive, we found two octopuses nestled in rocks and much to our surprise, they started mating. The act itself was not as amazing as the colors that these creatures displayed while together. What an unbelievable site against the backdrop of brilliant white sand and towering granite cliffs.

Our visit to Vallée de Mai was just as impressive as our dives. The Vallée de Mai forest on Praslin is home to the unique Coco-de-Mer palms. The Coco-de-Mer palms are either male or female and upon reaching maturity in 20 to 40 years, the palms produce their famous blooms in the suggestive shapes of the human male or female pelvis. The impressive palms grow up to 40 meters or 131 feet high and can live up to 200 years. Vallée de Mai has over 6,000 Coco-de-Mer palms and is also home to the rare Seychelles Black Parrot. We not only spotted the Black Parrot but we also saw rare Blue Pigeons on our hike. Unfortunately, we did not have time to fully explore the reserve, but if you visit make time to trek through this extraordinary UNESCO World Heritage Site.

WHALE SHARKS BELOW!

By far the most exciting and exhilarating event was taking part in the Whale Shark Program.

In the last few years, a small number of whale sharks have been spotted in and around Dubai. EDA wanted more information on how Dubai might be a part of the whale shark monitoring program, which allows scientists to observe and track the movements of these gentle giants. This was an opportunity to learn how the Seychelles runs its program and personally participate in the Whale Shark Monitoring Program. This was an afternoon of a lifetime!

We started with an introduction to the Marine Conservation Society, Seychelles, and an overview of the whale shark program from David Rowat, a director of MCSS. The MCSS has been monitoring whale sharks since 1996. To assist in raising money for the program, visitors are given an opportunity to snorkel with the protected species while assisting MCSS in collecting data such as markings, scars or tag numbers on the sharks.

We boarded our boat and headed out to sea with high hopes of spotting whale sharks. With the help of the MCSS micro-light above, we spotted our first shark near the surface. Wow! These creatures are huge! The trick was for us to slide into the water without much splash so as not to scare it away. These gentle giants were so graceful and seemed to glide through the waters while we just tried to keep composed while remembering to breathe.

One of the sharks seemed playful and spent time swimming with us. I was caught by surprise when he turned and I ended up directly in front of him – not the best place to be. I tried to remain calm while figuring out what to do. Thoughts of “Jonah and the Whale” flashed through my mind, but luckily he turned away and then nearly swatted me with his tail (this is on video, which we hope to get soon). Don't worry – these sharks mostly eat plankton and small crustaceans, not humans.

We were fortunate to swim with three whale sharks, two males and one female. The smallest shark was the female at about 5 meters, or nearly 16 ½ feet, and the largest male was 8 meters, or just over 26 feet. All three are classified as “juveniles” – I can't imagine what it would be like to encounter an “adult”. Our afternoon



Photo by Ivan Ramos

finally came to an end but this memory will be with us for years to come.

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

The Seychelles Tourism Board did a remarkable job in setting up this visit, including our accommodation. We stayed at some amazing resorts.

The Plantation Club Resort & Casino spans a lush 180 acres. Situated on a coconut plantation, the resort is located on the south-west coast of Mahé with 200 rooms and a beautiful beach and pool. This is an excellent resort to consider if traveling with children or if you like hitting the casinos. It also has direct access to Dive Resorts Seychelles, one of the outfits we dove with during our stay.



Photo by Ally Landes, The Wharf Hotel & Marina

Also on Mahé is the Wharf Hotel & Marina. This gem of a small hotel is perfect for those who are also considering deep sea fishing or charting a sailboat/catamaran. Although it has no beach, the views of neighboring islands and the marina are stunning and the pool is deep azure tile beckons you to take a dip. The rooms are beautifully appointed with great detail given to the bathrooms and amenities. If traveling in a large group, the 4-bedroom penthouse is worth strong consideration. The penthouse has a wonderful large and comfortable living area with dining room and kitchen, but best is the large balcony

with sea views. What a perfect way to start your day with coffee and an even better way to end your day catching up with family or friends, smoking a cigar or simply star gazing. The hotel is on the east coast of Mahé between the airport and Victoria.

On Praslin, we only stayed at one hotel, but one was enough – La Reserve Hotel. This privately-owned luxury hotel is located on secluded private beach at Anse Petite Cour. The spacious 40 rooms are well appointed – simply quite beautiful – and each has a balcony or patio which over looks the water. The hotel is set among tropical gardens, hills and piercing turquoise water perfect for snorkeling. We saw many colorful fish and a few small sting rays while exploring our surroundings. If you prefer pools to the ocean, La Reserve has one of the most incredible pools in the Seychelles with lush landscaping, waterfall, and an inviting swim-up bar. The attention to detail by the staff and the exquisite setting makes this resort a fantastic choice for a wedding, honeymoon or that special get-away.

Labriz Silhouette is located on the mountainous island of Silhouette, an hour boat or 15 minute helicopter transfer from Mahé. We were on the boat. Although Labriz was still under construction during our visit, this secluded luxury hotel seems to have it all. The grounds are lush, the spa promises to be rejuvenating, and the scuba center will be state-of-the-art. All guests stay in one of the 110 private villas with beach, garden or mountain views. All villas are wonderfully appointed and the beach villas provide guests with views of the Indian Ocean and its magnificent sunrises. We especially liked the private outdoor shower. The resort's five restaurants are mostly completed and the meals we had



Photo by Ally Landes, Dream Yacht Charters

were great. The resort should be in full swing by January and we would love to visit sometime next year.

SAIL AWAY

A challenge of visiting any island chain is transportation between the islands. Often there is a balance between spending time on one or two islands, or taking time to visit many islands. One option to beat this challenge is chartering a live-aboard sailboat. The Seychelles has several well-established charter companies from which to choose. The Moorings has excellent operations adjacent to the Warf Hotel & Marina, and our group set sail on a new catamaran from Dream Yacht Charters. The catamaran not only gave us the opportunity to enjoy the sun and water, but also to view some of the

smaller islands. The resorts we visited were beyond comfortable, but chartering does have the advantage of flexibility, no worries about dinner reservations, or which resort to book. If we visit the Seychelles again, we will seriously consider a live-aboard.

GOOD EATS

Let's not forget sampling the savory and sweet dishes of local Creole cooks. One of our favorite evenings was spent at the Anse Soleil Café on the Anse Soleil beach. The sunset was beautiful as we played in the sand and the grilled fish was excellent. You'll need to have a local take away as this restaurant is truly local and out-of-the way. We also spent another glorious sunset and dinner at the Boat House Restaurant. This Boat House is famous for

its Friday night buffets featuring the catch of the day grilled to perfection. The buffet also featured Island specialties made with coconut, breadfruit and mango. Both restaurants are on Mahé and both are tops in local Creole cuisine.

GETTING THERE

Getting to the Seychelles Islands from the UAE is not as difficult as it may seem. It was an easy and affordable non-stop 4 ½ hour flight from Dubai. Our group flew Emirates Airlines, a co-sponsor of the trip and great supporter of EDA. Emirates flies to Victoria International Airport four times weekly. Qatar Air and Air France also fly in to the Seychelles.

BEFORE YOU GO, KNOW . . .

- Although the currency is the Seychelles Rupee, visitors may use only US dollars, Euros or credit cards at all hotels and hospitality-based business so no need to worry about currency exchange. Most other businesses readily take dollars or Euros. Just be sure to bring cash; it can get expensive.
- Bring and use lots of sunscreen, the Islands are only 10° south of the Equator.
- Dress for the heat and the beach – loose clothes, a hat, and sunglasses are a must. Although the temperature is pretty even year-round, it is hot and humid. Walking shoes are recommended when visiting the nature reserves.
- Seychelles uses the British standard 220-240 volts, three-pin 13 amp plugs; bring adaptors.
- Shops are generally open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm weekdays and from 8:00 am to noon on Saturdays. Most shops are closed on Sundays.
- Seychelles Islands are four hours ahead of GMT – that's 8 hours ahead of EST or 9 during DST.

Good weather, beautiful beaches, and excellent service can be found many places, but you will not find the best of these qualities in wonderful secluded surroundings anywhere but in the Seychelles. We were constantly struck by the fact that dive sites were mostly untouched, never crowded, and no matter how fantastic the beaches and resorts, we were often the only ones around. The Seychelles is one place where you can truly get away from it all.



Seychelles Tourism Office - Middle East, Dubai - UAE
Tel: +971 4 2865586 Email: Seychelles@stome.ae
www.seychelles.com

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seychelles



EDA FAM TRIP SEYCHELLES

By Emmanuelle Landais



Photo by Ally Landes

Arriving in Seychelles you do wonder how such a gorgeous place exists and why you're only discovering it now. It is beautiful. The colours of the sea, the clouds and the islands' dense green foliage just blow you away. So much contrast in such simple things.

On arrival the holiday feel is electric and everyone is mesmerized despite fighting sleep. The first giggles emerged when passports were stamped and we caught a glimpse at our first coco-de-mer.

After being met by Verena Joseph from the Seychelles Tourism Board, flowered garlands were hung around our necks and beaming with smugness we boarded the Masons Travel bus and headed to the Plantation Club Resort.

This hotel is set in a stunning 180 acres of lush tropical gardens that lead down to a great 1km stretch of beach at Baie Lazare. This is a well established hotel on the main island of Mahe.

A small sleep for some and a stroll on the beach for others later and it was time for our first dive with the hotel's dive centre, Dive Resorts Seychelles managed by Leo Hoevers.

Hoevers, 46, originally from Holland has been diving for 31 years and arrived in the Seychelles in 1991. His first dives were in the North Sea, a world away from the Indian Ocean and originally developed a passion for diving and the ocean from watching Flipper as a child. "From the age of 8 I wanted to be a diver," he said.

rainfall leading to flooding and landslides, elevated sea-surface temperatures resulting in severe coral bleaching and followed by extended droughts causing acute water shortages.

"There are little corals in Seychelles as they are mainly granite islands. They were never coral islands to begin with. Luckily the government is promoting eco tourism. We are learning from other countries and have realized that if we introduce mass tourism it will decrease the environment," said Hoevers.

"A lot has been done with the fishing community. They've started to use mooring lines instead of dropping anchors all over the place. The government is doing what it can and dive centres making a living from

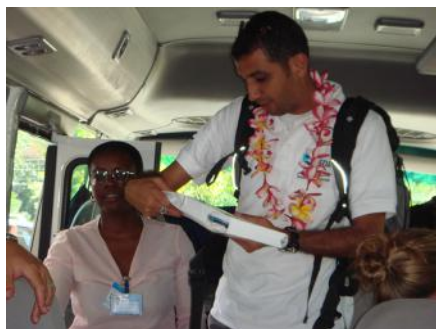


Photo by Ivan Ramos, Verena Joseph and Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi

"Seychelles is the most fantastic destination but it has never been a diving destination, it's not that happening and it remains undiscovered. Most islands are still uninhabited and some of the outer islands are untouched, it's the last frontier," said Hoevers.

In 1998 the Seychelles suffered from the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). The main climatic events, being extreme



Photo by Ally Landes, EDA crew & Dive Resorts Seychelles staff.

the ocean have rules. We don't use gloves and spear fishing is not allowed. We try and police certain areas and collect old fishing nets," said Hoevers.

The dive centre has around 120 customers a month and is a learning centre offering all the courses to start people scuba diving. The centre has 15 dive sites that they frequent and are expecting a wreck, a Taiwanese trawler. "It will take time for growth to appear but we are very excited to get this new dive site. We have been asking for it for a number of years," said Hoevers.

The Seychelles are made up of 115 islands with the main hub islands clustering around Mahé, home to the smallest capital city in the world, Victoria with its very own clock tower and an international airport.

Mahe is the biggest of the granite islands and covers a surface of 152 km squared. It is 27km long and 8km wide and 90 per cent of the Seychelles population - around 82,500 people - lives there.

Praslin and La Digue are satellite islands and together they form the Inner Islands. They are the cultural and economic hub of the nation with the majority of Seychelles' tourism facilities, including some of the most stunning beaches.



Photo by Ally Landes, EDA group

Gilly Fideria of Big Blue Divers took us diving... island style... Seychelle style... as he loved to tell us. Lileu Island was the dive site and quite an octopus mating area.

A refreshing must-go-to restaurant on Mahé, post-dive, is the Anse Soleil Café located on the beach front where you can enjoy fresh seafood and catch of the day while watching the sun go down. Whether you have shark or not is at your own discretion!

Getting from one island to the other can be achieved by flying or sailing. The flight from Mahe to Praslin takes about 15 minutes, but you still need to get to



Photo by Ally Landes

the airport about an hour beforehand. A small 20-or-so seater plane flies at 2000 feet high giving great views of your departure and arrival island across vast expanses of water.



Photo by Peter Mainka

From this height the islands look like green pods just resting on the surface of the water and in the mass of water below you, you might find yourself eagerly spying the waves for a sudden school of dolphins to leap through the water, or better yet whale sharks, something... You probably won't see anything apart from ant-sized yachts but it makes the journey more fun.

Masons Travel can also organise boat transfers which apparently take about an hour and a half. Praslin is about 40km to the north east of Mahé and it's the second largest island of the Seychelles archipelago.

Praslin is much smaller than Mahé with a population of around 3000 people. We arrived at the La Reserve Hotel which has a colonial yet modern feel to it, with the rooms spread out over different levels and buildings each with a different theme. Most have sea views yet the hotel itself only offers a couple of metres of beach.

The restaurant juts out into the ocean on a type of covered jetty and at night with spotlights illuminating the water, dozens of fish can be seen. The hotel even has a small arena where giant tortoises will willingly pose for photographs.

Praslin is home to the Vallée de Mai which is the last natural habitat of the legendary

coco de mer palm forests and became a World Heritage Site in 1983 and has been managed by the Seychelles Island Foundation since 1989.

It's worthwhile to note that more than half of Seychelles' total landmass has been given protected reserve status.

Vallée de Mai emerged after millions of years of isolation which enabled a unique community of plants and animals to develop here. Some species are found nowhere else.

The coco de mer is surrounded by myths and legends mainly due to the strange bi-lobed nuts, discovered long before the palm itself and partly because of the suggestive shapes of both male and female structures which occur on separate coco de mer palms.

The nuts, which can weigh more than 20 kilos, are now protected and cannot be eaten. According to locals, you don't want to try them anyway as they have a bland marshmallow type consistency with which not much can be made.

The palms reach heights of more than 30 metres high and the tallest palm currently in the forest and the only one in the world, measures 34 metres.

Apparently coco de mer nuts rarely fall from trees. In any case they won't drop from the tree until it is 7 or 8 years old.



Photo by Leena Abbas, Coco de Mer

Bleu Marine Dive Centre and Philippe Juliany on Praslin took us diving to Marianne South where we saw a gang of grey tip reef sharks circling around the area.

With each day getting better than the one before, it was unbelievable to spend two days on a catamaran courtesy of Dream Yacht Charters to sail around the islands.

We visited Curieuse Island along the way which is part of the Marine Parks

Authority and homes more than 200 giant tortoises.

The Marine Parks Authority (MPA) manages 5 islands which together make the Saint Anne Marine Park. Alan Cedras, 34, manager of the marine parks said each park was really unique. He used to work as a maths teacher but has always been motivated to protect the marine environment.

"Since 1997/98 lots of coral recuperated and the status of the corollary fish is improving. Some areas are untouched and not affected. Fish spawning helped to replenish the area and local fishermen were asked to fish in different areas," said Cedras.

The MPA runs the tagging programme for hawksbill turtles and monitors the turtles already tagged. *"The tagging programme started about 25 years ago so we are doing the follow up work. So far this year we have tagged 12 turtles,"* said Cedras.

"It's important to protect the environment for future generations and to sustain marine life. If we allowed the fishermen to fish anywhere many species would die out," he said.

For each island that is part of Saint Anne Marine Park, a two hundred metre distance from the shore is a protected area. This helps to limit poachers from fishing in the zone or laying fish traps, usually made of bamboo.

The giant tortoises on Curieuse Island were brought from the Aldabra atoll some 700 kilometres away to repopulate the island after sailors ate them or moved them to other islands.

The tortoises are left to roam freely on the island. The tortoises feed themselves and are not reared or looked after by the rangers. The rangers are just there to keep poachers away and educate visitors to the island.

Paul Lavigne, 40, is a ranger on the island and said there are 225 tortoises on Curieuse. *"A tortoise can lay about 30 eggs a year. Birds are not predators but crabs and rats are. We have no incubators, it's not a good idea it might spoil the eggs,"* said Lavigne.

Tortoises are reptiles. They don't stick together or form groups and they abandon the nest once the eggs are laid. *"Females can hold the sperm of a male for*



Photo by Ivan Ramos, Cobra one of the friendliest Giant Tortoises

maybe 4 or 5 years and will only use it when it wants to," said Lavigne.

Tortoises can live to 200 years old. A female can weigh 150 kilos and a male's weight can go up to 400 kilos.

After a morning watching, stroking and feeding the tortoises we had our own lunch. Barbecued fish on the beach followed by another dive with Blue Marine Dive Centre at Coral Garden dive site which is teeming with moray eels.

The following day we cruised on our catamaran to Aride Island, the bird citadel of the Indian Ocean which is the most northerly of the granite islands. The island has no habitations and rangers and researchers live in small shed like huts. They collect rain water and boil it so it is safe to drink.



Photo by Ally Landes

There are about 1 million birds on the island. According to Ben Samson, 35, a warden on the island since January 2006, around 15 tonnes of fish are caught everyday by birds to feed themselves. There are no predators on the islands – no cats or rats – and the number of



Photo by Ally Landes

lizards is quite epic. They are all over the floor; once you spot one you soon spot twenty more.

In the past Aride used to be a coconut plantation. The trees were felled and natural species were replanted.

One of the success stories of the island is the Seychelles magpie robin which was almost extinct. There are only 180 in the world, all of them on Aride as they don't migrate and stay on the island.

After we left the island we headed back to Mahé to our biggest adventure. Whale Shark tagging!!!

The Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles (MCSS) has carried out a whale shark tagging programme since 1996. David Rowat, director of the Underwater Centre Seychelles which runs the whale shark tagging programme with the MCSS said sightings of a 'black sea monster' date



Photo by Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi

back to 1768 since the Seychelles were inhabited. Fifty years later a white spotted shark was caught and it was recorded in diaries.

"The shark was caught and sliced open. Thirty nine live baby whale sharks were found inside. This was the first recording that whale sharks give birth to live young, but it wasn't confirmed until 1977 through research," said Rowat.

Whale Sharks are protected under the wild animals protection bill in Seychelles and local whale shark sightings are on the increase.

Whale shark is a coveted meat on the Asian markets, specifically in the Philippines, India and Taiwan. A seven metre long shark, not gutted and left on a beach would sell for USD 70,000, said Rowat. *"This meant that fishermen would be earning more with one shark than in their entire fishing life,"* he said.

Whale Sharks are sparsely distributed around tropical seas and not well documented, yet through the tagging programme more are being discovered and travelling patterns are monitored, said Rowat

Annually, 25 whale sharks are tagged with the help of a microlight which does an aerial survey to track the sharks. Boat surveys were completely unfruitful in the beginning, reporting no sightings yet the first aerial survey spotted eleven whale sharks in the same week.

Only eight people can snorkel with the whale shark at a time as more would cause confusion in the water and probably scare the animal away.

We are asked to count the white spots on the whale shark and the number of remoras travelling with it and the number of pilot fish riding the pressure wave in front of its mouth and nose.

If the animal is already tagged, its number is recorded as well as an estimate of its size, age and sex. We had to remain towards the tail end of the shark and not touch or stroke it by remaining at a distance of 3 metres away from it.

The tag is a numbered luminous yellow 'aquisign' made of soft silicon rubber

which makes it impossible for barnacles to grip on to it, an evolution from the original fibreglass placards which became one inch thick barnacle sandwiches. They became brittle and broke off when the sharks dive to deep depths.

The tag is attached to the shark's back with a long pole and literally poked into the skin. Apparently whale sharks are able to sustain severe injuries and scars recover well, so attaching the tag does not cause much discomfort.



Photo by Joanna Thornton, our welcome drinks

Unfortunately on the day, the pole broke due to the pressure of the shark's body in the water and the last shark of the season to be tagged, got away.

Before heading back to Dubai we were finally exposed to some history and culture of the Seychellois and Creole background.

Most of the folklore is based on the ancestral slave days with songs and music retelling the stories of the past. Despite the uplifting Creole chanting and drums, the songs are often actually quite sad.

We also visited a coconut museum where everything you can think of is made from coconuts and the coconut palm.



Photo by Ally Landes, a view from La Reserve



CLEAN UP ARABIA 2006

The 11th anniversary of Clean Up Arabia witnessed the biggest number of participants in its history! Nearly a thousand volunteers from across the Emirates and as far as Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain joined the annual clean up.

See the next few pages for details.

Many, many thanks to all of you who volunteered their time and effort to the event. We couldn't have done it without you!

Thanks to our sponsors: HSBC (Main Clean Up Sponsor), Majid Al Futtaim Group, Dubai Duty Free, Shell, Al Masood, Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort, SAE.

Thanks to our partners: Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, UAE Ministry of Environment, Dibba Municipality, UNEP, Clean Up the World, Ocean Conservancy, Kuwait Oil Company, Bahrain Women's Society, Nomad Ocean Adventures, Arabian Diver.

CLEAN UP ARABIA COORDINATORS

1. Ms. Alaá Ahmad - Bahrain Women's Society, Bahrain
2. Mr. Christophe Chellapermal - Nomad Ocean Adventures, Musandam - Oman
3. Capt. Mohammed Al Basri - Dive Team, Kuwait Oil Company - Kuwait
4. Mr. Adel Khatib - Arabian Diver (Ras Al Khaimah)
5. Mrs. Kathleen Russell - EDA Abu Dhabi Committee
6. Ms. Melrose Valencia - EDA Clean Up Coordinator

FAST FACTS AND FIGURES

Total number of items collected: **9948**

Total number of bags collected: **525**

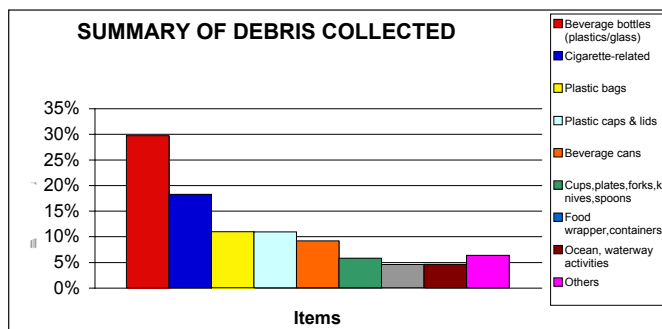
Some items of local concern: baby turtle in net, bones in plastic bag, 50kg of metal items with toxic chemicals, stained clothing weighed down with rocks.

HUGE SUCCESS!

Items Collected	Group Totals
Shoreline/recreational activities	
Bags	1087
Balloons	0
Beverage bottles (plastics)	1866
Beverage bottles (glass)	1087
Beverage cans	906
Caps (lids)	1080
Clothing	292
Cups, plates, forks, knives, spoons	572
Food wrapper, containers	453
Pull tabs	0
6-pack holders	0
Shotgun shells, wadding	0
Straws, stirrers	200
Toys	2
Ocean, waterway activities	
Bait container, packing	2
Bleach, cleaner bottles	4
Buoys	54
Crabs, lobster, fish traps	2
Crates	0
Fishing line	135
Fishing lures, light sticks	40
Fishing nets	48
Light bulbs, tubes	0
Oil, lube bottles	66
Pallets	1
Plastic sheeting, tarps	29
Rope	68
Strapping bands	8
Smoking-related activities	
Cigarettes, cigarette filters	1813
Cigarette lighter	1
Cigar tips	0
Tobacco packaging, wrapper	7
Dumping activities	
Appliance (refrigerators, washers, etc)	4
Batteries	7
Building materials	80
Cars, car parts	0
55 gal drum	4
Tires	1
Medical, personal hygiene	
Condoms	8
Diapers	19
Syringes	0
Tampons, tampon applicators	2
Total per team	9948

Debris items of local concern	
Turtle in net	1
2x hard hat	1
Skateboard	1
FM radio	1
Bones in plastic bag	1
Plastic mobile cover	1
PVC tubes	1
Carpet	1
Shopping cart	1
Broken glass	1
Bucket	1
Anchors	5
Metal pipes/items/cable	46
Umbrellas	3
Appliance/mechanical parts	4
Newspaper/tissue paper/paper	242
Stained clothing weighed down by rocks	1
50 kg of metals items with toxic chemicals	1
Manufactured wood/wood	64
Number of bags of trash	525

SUMMARY OF DEBRIS COLLECTED		
Beverage bottles (plastics/glass)	30%	2953
Cigarette-related	18%	1813
Plastic bags	11%	1087
Plastic caps & lids	11%	1080
Beverage cans	9%	906
Cups, plates, forks, knives, spoons	6%	572
Food wrapper, containers	5%	453
Ocean, waterway activities	5%	457
Others	6%	627



CLEAN UP ARABIA EAST COAST

EDA's 11th Annual Clean Up Arabia, scheduled on 11-11-2006, started with a Beach Camp the night before. Dozens of divers, students, environmentalists and first-time participants gathered on the beach outside Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort in Fujairah, turning it into a massive campsite. They got into the mood for the next day's events with communal bonfires, barbeques, drum circles and fire walking. The informal events brought together volunteers of vastly varying backgrounds, allowing them to meet and connect before the big clean up drive. The partying continued well into the night, making the 9 o'clock registration and assembly time a bit perilous for some.

Despite the late hours, many volunteers made it to registration the next morning. EDA saw over 80 new members sign up to participate in the clean up, and a total of over 450 volunteers signed on to clean Fujairah's coast and shore. Divers were assigned to be on one of the 15 boats that were headed for Dibba Harbour, Oceanic Hotel Bay, Martini Rock and Shark Island dive sites. Land bound volunteers spread out on the beaches armed with cotton gloves and sacks to pick up rubbish left behind by others.

The dive missions threw many divers together for the first time for the shared goal of cleaning the seas. Boat number one had a master diver, a swimming instructor, a newly certified diver, a student filming an underwater documentary and a couple of seasoned hands - from countries as different as South Africa, the Philippines, Germany, Serbia, Lebanon, Britain and Australia. On board together, the comrades in wet suits talked and joked, suggesting this landlubber use another diver's kit as a sick-sack in case of emergencies.

They, like the other 140 divers, battled high wave action and murky water to scour the bottoms of the Fujairah coast. They hauled up long-forgotten anchors, illegal fishing nets, steel drums, rope and poles. After bringing up as much rubbish as they could, they then hit out for some of the remoter islands and beaches, where the divers ditched their oxygen tanks and peeled back their wet suits to get down into the scrub brush and in between rocky crevasses to fish out rubbish. The garbage consisted mainly of cans, bottles, polystyrene, plastic bags - the remnants of many well-intended picnics and campfires.

After cleaning their assigned areas, all divers gathered up their full bags and headed back to the meeting point on Le Meridien's beach.

The waste was collected for the EDA's survey and participants left to wash up and eat lunch. Afterwards some headed home, others went to enjoy the rest of the day at the beach, while some went to watch football matches among EDA members, HSBC, Shell, Dubai Duty Free, Le Meridien and the Coast Guard with Dubai Duty Free emerging as champions.

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ABU DHABI DIVERS AND BEACH VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP THE CORNICHE

By Kathleen Russell, Al Masood Marine and Engineering and Laila Al Hassan,
Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi



Over 100 divers and 100 volunteers came together on a beautiful sunny day for a good cause. They were there, gloves and all; ready to clear the waters and beaches of Abu Dhabi from marine litter and debris. The volunteers were brought together on November 11th, 2006 as part of the Clean Up Arabia 2006 campaign.

Emirates Diving Association and Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi coordinated the Abu Dhabi campaign and Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club (ADIMSC) facilitated the venue. Volunteers ranged between 5 - 60 years of age. Children, housewives and senior managers all lent a helping hand to clear and sort the trash both in the water along the Corniche from ADIMSC to Sheraton Beach Resort and along the beach beside the Hiltonia Beach Resort.

During the underwater clean up, divers donned their scuba gear at ADIMSC and splashed for trash across the Corniche. The enthusiastic volunteers not only collected a substantial amount of marine debris but also then stayed to count and sort it. Some plastics were even recycled. Participating in this year's underwater clean up in Abu Dhabi were EDA members, GASCO dive club, Total ABK dive club, ZADCO, DiveCo, ADMA, Frog Legs Scuba Club, Al Masood Marine and Engineering, Petroleum Institute, Dive-Inn Diving Centre, and Abu Dhabi Sub Aqua Club (ADSAC).

For the beach clean up, volunteers and their families came together from Al Dar, Abu Dhabi Airports Company (ADAC), GASCO, and Parsons. Many of Abu Dhabi's youth and children as well as their parents were there to carry out their part in the campaign.

According to an official spokesperson from ADAC, one of the companies that volunteered their participation confirms their commitment to preserving our local environment. He added that environmental protection features high on almost all aspects of the Airport redevelopment programme.

The volunteers were brought together in a meaningful activity that will help change their environment for the better. The volunteers were mobilized around a powerful idea – that one careless moment could have a negative impact on our marine life through our lifetime, our children's lifetime and future generations. Armed with all the necessary tools such as gloves, trash bags, protective caps from the sun and plenty of bottled water to drink, the volunteers collected an impressive quantity of litter.

SUMMARY OF MARINE DEBRIS IN ABU DHABI

- **Most abundant marine debris found:** beverage cans, plastic bottles, plastic cups, plates, cutlery
- **Item of most concern found underwater:** dead baby Green turtle entangled in fishing net
- **Unusual marine debris found underwater:** wheel barrel, shopping carts, FM radio, and skateboard
- **Most abundant beach debris found:** cigarette butts, bottle caps, and plastic bags
- **Least favourable find on the beach:** baby diapers

Clean Up Coordinator: Ms. Kathleen Russell
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Group photo Volunteer divers



Safety and Orientation briefing before the underwater clean up



Trash counting



Beach volunteers



Dead Baby marine turtle entangled in a fishing net



Volunteers from the Zayed University, Green Mission Club



Divers from Petroleum Institute



Diver bringing marine debris in a shopping trolley also found underwater



Diver collecting trash along the Corniche



Divers sorting and counting trash

CLEAN UP ARABIA RAS AL KHAIMAH

By Arabian Diver

For the first time, Ras Al Khaimah joined the annual Clean up Arabia event with great success. Volunteers linked up with Arabian Diver to take the first step in making a difference by collecting around 1 ton of trash that has been washed ashore or left behind by beach-goers along the shoreline of Maarid area.

From 9:00AM to 3:00PM on the 11th of November, 60 volunteers of all ages, composed of individuals, families, students and organizations, and both locals and foreigners, joined forces with Arabian Diver to make the Maarid beach and shoreline a clean, beautiful and safe area for visitors and marine animals.

The garbage that was collected filled 129 trash bags. 39% of the trash came from vessel operations and debris from fishing equipment including foam floats, fishing lines, lube and oil bottles, containers and rope; 36% came from plastic beverage bottles while 22% were glass beverage bottles. The rest included clothing, cans and cardboard.

Although there are still lots of trash to be removed around Maarid, we are firm believers in the collective power of concerned and aware individuals. For this, Arabian Diver would like to thank each one of the volunteers that made this community event a success. Special thanks to The Ras Al Khaimah Sailing Association (RAKSA) for all their support, The Environmental Education and Awareness Unit and the teachers and students of the Ras Al Khaimah English Speaking School (RAKESS), whose enthusiasm and motivation inspired us even more.

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Arabian Diver

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CLEAN UP ARABIA BAHRAIN

By the Bahrain Women's Society



The people of the Kingdom of Bahrain have a long history with the sea. For thousands of years, it has been a big part of their cultural identity. But rapid trade and industrial expansion have detached them from it, and now locals only visit the beach for gathering and relaxation. Yet these seldom visits left the beautiful beaches of Bahrain full of waste and garbage.

To battle that, the Environmental Citizenship Programme (ECP) of the Bahrain Women's Society decided to take part in the regional campaign to clean beaches and dive sites - Clean up Arabia - introduced by one of their partners, the Emirates Diving Association. The campaign took place on the 11th November 2006, 9 - 11 A.M. and targeted Al Budaya beach which was suffering from neglect and was sadly filthy, even though it is surrounded by houses.

The aim of the campaign was in line with ECP's objectives of raising local awareness concerning beach littering, in addition to cleaning the site, encouraging citizens to participate constructively to achieve a difference, and maintaining a clean and sound environment.

Over 90 individuals of all ages and from different walks of life participated actively in the campaign. Some came as families - parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc. All were eager to make a difference as they filled over 180 large trash bags and did not stop working until the beach was significantly cleaned. These ninety individuals choose to be on the beach, participating positively in conserving the environment even though it was an examination period for students and NGOs were heavily engaged in the elections. These ninety individuals choose to make a difference on that day. And they did.

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CLEAN UP ARABIA MUSANDAM - OMAN

By Christophe Chellapermal, Nomad Ocean Adventures

Nomad Ocean Adventures teamed up with EDA in prime form on the 10th of November to organize and sponsor the Musandam segment of the 11th annual Clean Up Arabia campaign.

Despite the sweltering heat and somewhat foreboding clouds, we got together at Dibba harbor bright and early on Friday morning. The divers were the first to go out to Haffa beach where a group of 7 ventured underwater to gather the remnants of previous visitors' litter in the area. Next were the beach cleaners, who traveled to Miam beach, a popular campsite due to its proximity to the harbor, to gather as much trash as possible.

Both clean ups were a resounding success with a total collection of over 1000 unwanted items. From the beach, the litter was of diverse types but was mostly the kind that campers or day-trippers leave behind after a visit to the beach. From underwater, the divers collected fishing nets, fishing cages fishing lines that had entangled themselves in the coral and marine life. The most heartwarming event of the cleanup was the freeing of the 7 puffer fish and 5 sturgeons that were trapped in fishing cages. We were able to save the fish and let them roam again in their natural environment.

From this trip, I have come to realize two important points: Firstly, as a community, we must be mindful of what we leave behind during trips to these natural surroundings. We must understand that by not collecting our garbage, we could ruin the beautiful natural environment and possibly injure wild animals and future visitors to the area. During the clean up, we found several pieces of broken glass and plastic only after we ran a rake over the sand! Just remember that no one is there to clean these beaches and all it takes to keep them clean is for us to simply pick up after ourselves.

Secondly - a point that is close to my heart as a passionate diver and marine life enthusiast - are the materials that fishermen are using in their profession and the lack of education associated with these. Some aid must be given to fishermen, some sort of subsidy that would allow them to afford buying biodegradable fishing nets. This kind of fishing net, if left to rot in the sea, will only entrap innocent marine life, which is not what it is intended for. As a community, we must sponsor and support this initiative and do our part to educate fishermen of the potential dangers of using the materials that they are currently using.

Finally, I'd like to extend a very warm thank you and congratulations to everyone who was involved in the clean up. As a regular visitor to these sites, it was really wonderful to see so many people give up their day off to come and support something incredibly worthwhile. Thanks also to EDA for working closely with us to ensure the success of this project. We look forward to welcoming you again at the 12th annual Clean Up Arabia in Musandam!



Clean Up Coordinator: Mr. Christophe Chellapermal
Nomad Ocean Adventures
Email: chris@discovernomad.com
Website: www.discovernomad.com

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

EDA would like to thank the participants who sent in their constructive comments about Clean Up Arabia. We appreciate the helpful suggestions and will take them into consideration when planning the 2007 Clean Up Arabia which will be organized by a special committee of EDA members.

Gael Chevolleau, EDA Member #751



"It is always a pleasure to contribute to making a difference or at least make people shift the way they interact with their environment. These are just a couple of ideas that might make a difference:

- Allow more time for the underwater clean up
- Create an awareness campaign targeting the

people that use the shore for camping, picnics and the people using the harbors (fisherman, leisure and tourists boats).

- Have more equipment available for scuba divers, like lift bags etc. It was a great initiative, I'll do it again anytime! Thank you for asking for feed back. It shows that you care and that you want to make things better. Highly appreciated!"

Paula Stones, EDA Member #29



"A big thank you for a great event. We all enjoyed the camp and the clean up... the far ends of both beaches were in bad need of cleaning. Perhaps next time, some volunteers can be driven to each end and work backwards towards the hotel."

Anna Doherty, EDA Member #670



"Could have done with more clean up time as only did half of beach. More kids/schools involved next time?"

Filipino Scuba Divers Club, EDA individual members



"Although a great success, it would have been more fun if there were some activities during camping night for people to get to know each other. An EDA person should have been assigned in the beach camp area for

inquiries. The clean up though was great as we had the chance to unite as one for the environment."

Nizar Fakhoury, EDA Member #711



"Thank you for an extraordinary and successful clean up. I remain at your disposal in the future and would be honored to assist you in any local or international clean ups and environmental activities.

- The divers' boats were not equipped with sufficient YELLOW bags for shoreline clean up.
- The divers' bags (red net) were too small.
- There was not enough time to clean up the waste (for the Divers)."

Anas Diab, EDA Member #742



"Thank you for being so organized and helpful. Everything went pretty smoothly on the cleaning day inspite of the large number of participants. For a suggestion, it might be helpful if you could provide divers with some kind of trash pickers, which can help them reach and collect things like soda cans and plastic bottles in tight gaps between rocks, especially when there is lots of those black spiky things on the rocks. There is nothing like participating in a good cause and having fun at the same time!"

David Hallam, EDA Member #735



"It was a great day, we all really enjoyed it and felt like we had done something good.

- Have a camping area within the grounds of the beach with toilet facilities and showers on site.
- For the clean up dive to get bigger; SCUBA diving with rental equipment has to be available at a reasonable price. Snorkeling needs to be well advertised as this will appeal to a much wider range of people.
- Schools could also become involved, a clean up dive could be offered as a one-day school trip. This could be organised annually and arranged individually with schools."

HALCROW (13 participants), EDA supporter



"The trip was very much appreciated by the participants as it helped to refresh their minds about their responsibilities towards the environment and now they are in the position to promote better environmental awareness among their colleagues and friends. The journey also helped the volunteers from different departments and

offices of Halcrow to get to know each other."

Norman Wright and group (17 participants), EDA Supporter

"We very much enjoyed the event though honestly, we were done cleaning up our side of the hotel by 11:00. I wonder if it would make sense to have a separate meeting time for the land and sea groups. I am assuming that the divers need 3 hours in order to get to the site, clean up, and return. It might make some sense to have the beach clean up group show up one hour after the dive group. Alternatively, given the large turnout, it may be time to add more sites."



The Dubai Duty Free group, not slow to miss a marketing opportunity

DUBAI DUTY FREE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Background TO DUBAI DUTY FREE'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Dubai Duty Free has been taking its environmental responsibilities seriously for a long time and started its recycling programme in 1992. At this time, it was primarily concerned with the recycling of paper and cardboard packing materials and during the first year of recycling, sent approximately 30 tonnes to the salvor. In 2005, almost 715 tonnes were sent.

This may seem on the face of it a great success, but although the recycling is important, we at Dubai Duty Free consider it equally important to bring pressure to bear on our suppliers to reduce the amount packaging used on items they are shipping to us.

Another area of concern is plastic bags. Last year, we consumed 504 tonnes of plastic bags in our retail outlets. A vast amount you might think, but whereas our sales over the past five years have increased by 133% our plastic bag consumption has increased by only 57%. This has been done by reducing the number of microns in the smaller plastic bags used for lighter items, the use of protective sleeves on bottles to negate the use of two bags to avoid breakages and encouraging our staff to be more economical when customers are asking for extra bags in which to deliver gifts. It seems that our carrier bags are seen as something of a status symbol in some locations.

At Dubai Duty Free, we also like to use our marketing and sporting events as a vehicle to show our environmental activities. Each year during the Dubai Tennis Championships, we have a Kids Eco Garden - a fun place for the kids, not only to play but also to learn about the environment in a very unpressured way with quizzes, colouring and competitions with an environmental theme.

This has been very successful and we have many children returning year after year to learn a bit more about the environment whilst their parents are watching tennis. In addition, we have recently launched the Dubai Duty Free Kids' Eco Club.

In 1999, Dubai Duty Free formalized its good environmental practices by obtaining ISO 14001 certification. This certification has been maintained over the past seven years and was renewed in April this year along with the OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety certification. In addition, every two years, Dubai Duty Free presents the Dubai Duty Free Environment Award to one of its suppliers using best environmental practices, making Dubai Duty Free not only environmentally friendly, but also very aware of its corporate social responsibility.

DUBAI DUTY FREE AND EDA

Dubai Duty Free has been involved with EDA for the past five years. Our initial involvement was as a sponsor of Clean Up Arabia 2001 and we have continued to support this annual initiative through sponsorship and manpower.

We were happy to offer financial support to EDA for their coral reef monitoring research project and the knowledge gained from the exercise has proved invaluable. The research material has been used by the local authorities and environmentalists concerned with UAE marine life and the potential damage being caused to coral reefs due to the various ongoing projects.

Dubai Duty Free hopes to continue its cooperation with EDA to promote good environmental practices in Dubai and to passengers from all over the world passing through Dubai International Airport.



DUBAI DUTY FREE AND CLEAN UP ARABIA

Dubai Duty Free has been a great supporter of Clean up Arabia for the past six years. In addition to providing much appreciated sponsorship, we have been a great provider of manpower support to the event.

This year, a coach load of staff led by Haydee, Jasmine and Neil of DDF's Marketing Department left Dubai at 5.30am to be ready for a hard day's work and fun at Le Meridien Al Aqah. Although there were a few bleary eyes at the start of the journey, everyone was ready for action by the time they arrived at the hotel.



DDF Staff in action

Two hours later, after cleaning up the whole of the beach to the left of the hotel, the staff was ready for a well-deserved lunch and a short rest before the start of the eagerly awaited football tournament.



The rubbish is now in the sacks and no longer an eyesore on the beach

The Dubai Duty Free team took on the UAE Coast Guard (Fujairah) in the first round of the knock-out tournament, winning with a convincing 5-1 victory.

In the second round, they played against Le Meridien staff with DDF winning 3-1 followed by a victory over Shell in the 3rd round winning 2-0.



A very serious-looking Dubai Duty Free football team before the tournament



Dubai Duty Free's Yousef takes on a UAE Coast Guard player

The final was between Dubai Duty Free and Le Meridien guests with Dubai Duty Free coming out as the winner in a tense and exciting match, which was decided by penalty shoot out after being tied 3-3 at the end of normal time.



The victorious Dubai Duty Free football team

HSBC AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

By Leena Abbas



HSBC's rubbish collection

Corporate Social Responsibility is one of HSBC's strategic imperatives and that's why it has been supporting and sponsoring EDA's Clean Up Arabia since 2001.

This year, 25 HSBC staff members participated in the clean up (9 divers, 3 snorkellers and 12 beach clean up participants). Some of the volunteers embarked on an additional clean up dive a day before in Dibba - Musandam and camped on the campsite next to Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort.

The divers all agreed that the East Coast dive sites were clean (compared to the previous years), which is a good sign that HSBC's support has had a positive impact. However, more emphasis should be aimed at cleaning up the beaches. One of the regular volunteers said that in Dibba - Musandam, a total of approximately 20 large black bin bags were filled with rubbish collected from one of the beaches.

The event was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and their families and there was a great sense of fulfilment that was felt towards the end of the day when all the trash was collected for weighing and classification.

Amongst the other EDA activities that HSBC supports are the Reef Monitoring Project (RMP) and the Mooring Buoy Programme. RMP falls under an international organization called Reef Check, which scientifically monitors the health of the coral reefs around the world. Each country has its own set of volunteers that basically unify their efforts to carry out reef inspections on a monthly basis.

The UAE RMP team is comprised of EDA members - 2 of which are HSBC staff. The primary aim is to monitor the UAE's reefs. The skills needed to survey the coral reefs will eventually be shared with locals, the general public and youths around the UAE.

Worldwide, people travel to view pristine underwater ecosystems. Areas rich in coral play a vital role in attracting and boosting tourism in the area and dive companies are expanding to accommodate this increasing interest. In the UAE, the East Coast is fast becoming a 'hotspot' for development and it is important that these attractive and potentially economical areas remain ecologically sound.

As a socially and environmentally responsible organization, HSBC will continue supporting EDA's activities across the UAE.



Leena with Clean Up Arabia 2006 Flag



Registration



SHELL'S SUPPORT TO CLEAN UP ARABIA



SHELL Group

Few multinational companies have shown the kind of commitment to environmental and social causes like Shell has over the last few decades. As a socially responsible company, Shell has always been committed to initiatives that help in improving the natural environment and the communities it operates in.

A recent example of this was Shell's support to the annual Clean Up Arabia campaign organised by the Emirates Diving Association (EDA) which aimed at cleaning up debris and rubbish from the dive sites and beaches across the UAE. The campaign was an opportunity for Shell to work together with organisations from the private and public sector for a common cause, and its involvement was in line with the company's corporate social responsibility strategy and its commitment to sustainable development.

The UAE is known for its vast sandy beaches and for its beautiful coastline that attracts water sport enthusiasts and adventure lovers from near and far. Shell believes it is the collective responsibility of corporates and citizens of the country to ensure that the beaches are kept clean, and the company is keen on making the best use of every opportunity to make a positive difference to the environment.

This beach clean up campaign also complements Shell's own on-going environmental programs such as the Better Environment Awards which involves raising awareness of environmental issues and encouraging school children to work on projects that contribute to the preservation of the environment.

**“SHELL HAS ALWAYS BEEN
COMMITTED TO INITIATIVES
THAT HELP IN IMPROVING
THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
AND THE COMMUNITIES IT
OPERATES IN”**



DIBBA, FUJAIRAH MARINE RESERVES

By Ahmed Mohammed Al Abdouly, Director of Natural Reserves, Dibba Municipality - Fujairah

By virtue of the late **H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan**, the UAE pays special attention to the environment and protects it from any misuse, pollution or extinction. Based on this, **H.H. Sheikh Hamad Bin Mohamed Al Sharqi**, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Fujairah, issued the Emiri Decree No. 1 of the year 1995 regarding the nomination of some coastal areas in the Emirate of Fujairah as natural marine reserves. These areas are: Birds' Island, Dhadna, Al Aqqa and Bidya.

The issuance of the afore mentioned decree is considered the actual base to build awareness strategy in the environment field. This project is considered the first of its type in the Emirate of Fujairah and seeks to protect the fisheries and coral reefs that the East Coast is famous for.

The decree stipulates that in marine reserves, anchorage of any means or fishing by all its types is prohibited. The decree excluded some activities not harmful to the environment such as diving to carry out scientific researches and experiments and sailing for those who like the sea, provided that such exceptions shall not affect the components of the marine environment. The decree, moreover, imposed penalties on those who violate the prohibition rules or harm creatures in the marine protectorates.



DEFINITION OF A RESERVE

A Reserve is an area specified by the state to protect plants, land and marine animals, and other valuable natural resources in the fields of science, culture, tourism or beautification. In a reserve, the practice of activities harmful to the marine resources is strictly forbidden in order to protect them from disappearance. The required conditions of establishing natural protectorates may vary. The most important condition is to determine the goal of declaring a protectorate, either as a representative of a fundamental geographical system, or the protectorate contains a fragile marine environment system or rare kinds of plants

or animals. A reserve must also contain an area sufficient for the division into sections to accomplish the function or specialization thereof, in addition to the existence of a work plan to administer the reserve. "Al Asal" is the first reserve to secure a suitable environment for bees' multiplication.



DIBBA MARINE RESERVES

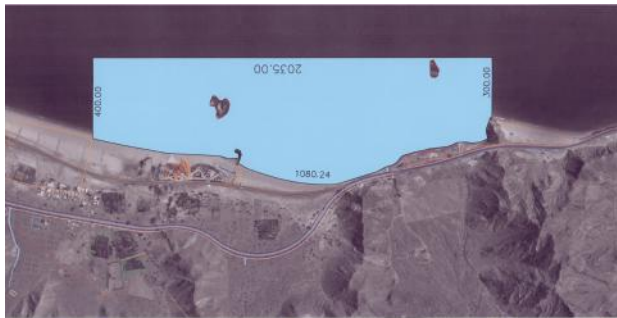
No.	Name	Length	Width	Location
1	Birds' Island	2910 near the coast	760 inside the sea	Al Fiqueet area
2	Dhadna	350 meter near the coast	240 meter inside the sea	Dhadna area
3	Al Aqqa	2035 meter near the coast	400 meter inside the sea	Al Aqqa area
4	Bidya	750 meter near the coast	525 inside the sea	Bidya



محمية البديه
AL BIDIYAH NATURAL RESERVE

قسم البيئة والمحميات الطبيعية
ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL PROTECTORATES SECTION

Location	AL BIDHIYA	منطقة البدية	الموقع
Length	750m a side the coast	٧٥٠م بمحاذاة الشاطئ	الطول
Width	525m inside the sea	٥٢٥م داخل البحر	العرض

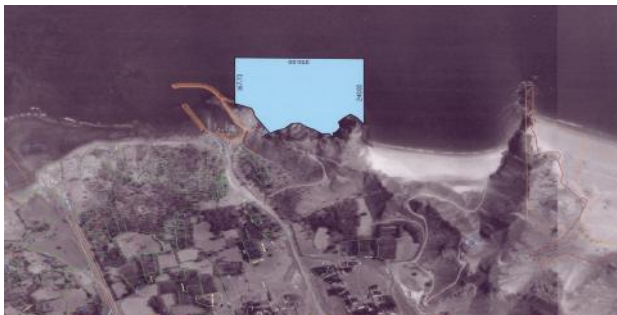


محمية العقه		قسم البيئة والمحميات الطبيعية	
AL AQQA NATURAL RESERVE		ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL PROTECTORATES SECTION	
Location	AL AQQA	الموقع	منطقة العقه
Length	2035m a side the coast	الطول	٢٠٣٥م بمحاذاة الشاطئ
Width	400m inside the sea	العرض	٤٠٠م داخل البحر

The aforementioned areas are located along the Fujairah coast in the administrative borders of the Dibba municipality.

One importance of these reserves is to maintain the marine environment and fisheries by securing a natural and safe atmosphere for multiplication, especially of rare types of fishes which the eastern area is famous for. Another is to protect the coral reefs and oysters from erosion and hence, attracts tourists to the areas.

Artificial reefs were first dropped in the areas in 1998. Based on the research carried out on the first type of artificial reefs, it was decided that the Reef balls technique should be used. The first dropping was carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment & Water-Marine Research Department, Dibba Municipality (Environment & Natural Protectorates Department), Emirates Diving Association (EDA) and Dibba Al Fujairah Fishermen Association. This project is still under monitoring up to now.



محمية ضدنا		قسم البيئة والمحميات الطبيعية	
DADNA NATURAL RESERVE		ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL PROTECTORATES SECTION	
Location	DADNA	منطقة ضدنا	الموقع
Length	350m a side the cost	٣٥٠م بمحاذاة الشاطئ <th>الطول</th>	الطول
Width	240m inside the sea	٢٤٠م داخل البحر <th>العرض</th>	العرض

“A RESERVE IS AN AREA SPECIFIED BY THE STATE TO PROTECT PLANTS, LAND AND MARINE ANIMALS, AND OTHER VALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE FIELDS OF SCIENCE, CULTURE, TOURISM OR BEAUTIFICATION”

SCUBA DIVING WITH DOLPHINS

Written by Aamer Hassanally, Master Diver



Aamer Hassanally, age 16

Living in a cozy little room on a tropical island resort off the coast of Honduras, I thought that life could not be better. I was greatly mistaken.

I was living on the island of Roatan, a diver's paradise, and home to the Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences (RIMS), where I would be studying. I was enrolled in a dive-intensive summer camp, and with my fellow campers, I was eager to learn about tropical marine life and to dive with the wide variety of species that can be found in tropical waters. But most of all, I was looking forward to doing what I had signed up for: scuba diving with dolphins.

Dolphins have always been one of my favorite animals, and the thought of diving with them was beyond belief. But before diving with the dolphins we had three days of regular diving which, despite my infatuation with dolphins, proved to be very exciting.

Our first day of diving was spectacular. First, we dove along a sixty-foot ridge, and enjoyed a humongous grouper, a lone barracuda, and most of all, the gigantic reef. Another equally beautiful dive followed and the rest of the night was spent at a beach fiesta with fire dancing, crab racing, a limbo competition, and, of course, delicious food.

It seemed as though the diving only got better, as the following day, after a morning lecture at RIMS, we relaxed with a drift dive. On this dive we saw many interesting creatures such as a Caribbean spiny lobster, a small barracuda, a hawksbill turtle, and many stingrays. The day had been great so far, and to top it all off, we had a lecture on dolphins' evolutionary past, behavior, and anatomy, after which we proceeded to the dolphin pen where we got to meet all thirty two members of the dolphin family, including the alpha male, Esteban, and the pregnant alpha female, Mika. After learning more about dolphins social interactions, we were allowed to give the dolphins hand signals as we admired them jumping, shaking hands, and vocalizing.

The third day of diving was the perfect prelude to our dolphin dive the following day. I was brimming with excitement as we slipped into the dolphin pen to snorkel with the dolphins. This was our first chance to actually play with the dolphins hands-on. Not

only was this activity gratifying, but it also left me wanting more. The next two dives were no less gratifying. On the afternoon dive we encountered a particularly friendly baby hawksbill turtle that seemed to take a keen interest in our group, and we ended up spending most of our time hanging about in the presence of "our pet turtle," as we later called it. The night dive, though, was a completely surreal experience. Upon entering the water, we were met by a scorpion fish, soon followed by an octopus and several lobsters. For the rest of the dive, we examined the coral polyps as they fed. By the time we were done, we were all thoroughly exhausted and ready to rest up for tomorrow's excursion.

I was up at the crack of dawn on the fourth day, eagerly awaiting the boat's skipper so that we could get going on what promised to be a very exciting day. Before the dolphin dive we headed out to the mangroves, where we dived in a very unusual environment. The roots of the mangroves served as a nursery for young marine life, and on the dive we saw fire worms, feather-duster worms, juvenile butterfly fish, blue tang and a one-inch long barracuda.

At long last, we reached the dive site, "Overheat Reef," being chased by two alpha male dolphins, Esteban and Paya. We descended with them to 60 feet and within seconds, they were off into the open ocean. We were told not to worry about the dolphins and that they would be back within a few minutes. And sure enough, a few minutes later, we were caught by surprise as the two dolphins glided past us in a playful fight. They rested in the sand briefly as we pet them and then, without warning, they shot to the surface. They both jumped out of the water and crossed over as though they had planned the whole thing and we watched in awe as they descended back to our level. The petting and jumping continued until we no longer had air in our tanks and we sadly ascended with the dolphins back to the boat. For the rest of the day, the chatter was about nothing but the dolphins, and we all went to sleep extremely satisfied.

The whole experience was unforgettable, and by the end of the trip, I was not ready to leave Roatan. As I grudgingly boarded my flight back to Dubai, all I could think about was the fun I had had at camp, and the incredible experience of diving with dolphins.

"THEY RESTED IN THE SAND BRIEFLY AS WE PET THEM AND THEN, WITHOUT WARNING, THEY SHOT TO THE SURFACE"



2007 IS “THE YEAR OF THE DOLPHIN”



Musandam Photo by Jason Sockett

**“DOLPHINS NEED CLEAN
AND QUIET OCEANS,
PROTECTED AREAS AND
PEOPLE WHO CARE”**

Dolphins are intrinsically tied to our cultural history and awareness. Living in oceans and rivers, they are a living treasure of our blue planet. However their survival is becoming increasingly difficult. Dolphins need clean and quiet oceans, protected areas and people who care.

The UN Convention on Migratory Species, together with its specialized agreements on dolphin conservation - The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) and The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) - and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) have declared 2007 the Year of the Dolphin.

The United Nations, Governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the private sector, namely TUI, are building a strong alliance to achieve a common objective: to protect dolphins. A crucial factor in achieving this is education to create awareness of dolphin species, educate, inform decision makers and involve local communities. Therefore, the Year of the Dolphin will be part of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. The campaign is also a tangible contribution towards meeting targets to reduce the loss of wildlife by 2010 which all Governments have agreed through the UN.

Patron of the Year of the Dolphin is H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco.

“The Year of the Dolphin gives me the opportunity to renew my firm commitment towards protecting marine biodiversity. With this strong initiative we can make a difference to save these fascinating marine mammals from the brink of extinction.” H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco.

For more information, check out:

http://www.yod2007.org/en/Start_page/index.html



Sara-Lise Haith

WOMEN DIVERS

Written by Sara-Lise Haith

to have gone to the deepest event in the world, she also became the first woman ever to pass the significant 100 meter mark in the Limited Variable Ballast story.

Initially, diving was very much a male oriented sport, mainly due to the military influence and that most dive training was done at navy level. There have only been a few Women Navy divers in the Hall of Fame and listed for famous contributions towards the diving industry. Also, women had limitations due to societal influences over the years, raising a family, including periods of pregnancy, lack of independence and other traditional factors. During the last 10 ten years, women have become more independent, have held successful careers and have enjoyed more disposable income. Travelling alone or with other female companions has become more popular and in general the mindset of women in society is slowly changing, and more women are becoming involved in extreme sports.

Personally I would not describe scuba diving as an extreme sport, although it does have certain risk factors which women should consider. Diving is definitely not recommended for pregnant women and also women with any cardiovascular or aural problems should be checked and cleared by a hyperbaric physician before commencing any kind of diving activity. Other than that, there are no other limitations

Diving is a very relaxing sport, and is not only about learning diving physics and equipment, but also is a chance to learn many other aspects of our marine environment. I would describe diving for women as a self-improvement course, as you can learn to improve your comfort level in and around water; you can learn about marine animals and coral reefs, get involved in conservation efforts locally and world-wide, learn history

During the 1500's, Leonardo da Vinci designed the first known scuba unit. His drawings of a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus appeared in his Codex Atlanticus. Da Vinci's design combined air supply and buoyancy control in a single system, and foreshadowed later diving suits. There is no evidence that he ever built his device. He seemed, instead, to have abandoned scuba in favour of refining the diving bell... However, what was the secret behind the relaxed smile of the Gioconda?

I have my own fun theories regarding this and one of those is that da Vinci also got his model to try out his new fangled scuba unit and when he painted her she had that serene diver look about her; possibly on a dive vacation in Rio de Janeiro? See the Sugar Loaf mountain in the background.

On a more serious note, over the years and revolutions of scuba and scuba equipment, women have been involved. Jacques Cousteau was famous for his inventions and innovations in SCUBA equipment and in 1943, Cousteau and two close friends, Philippe Tailliez and Frédérik Dumas, tested production prototypes of the Cousteau/Gagnan scuba system in the Mediterranean Sea. During July and August, the friends made hundreds of dives, thoroughly testing the system and seeking to determine its limits. (Jacques Cousteau's wife, Simone, and sons, Philippe and Jean-Michel, also tried out the prototype Aqua-Lung® units.

There are a couple of famous female divers who are worth mentioning:

Sylvia Earle, Sylvia is a marine biologist, lecturer, consultant, author (including *Sea Change & Wild Deep*), former Chief Scientist at NOAA, and founder and chairman of Deep Ocean Exploration & Research. She led the first team of women aquanauts in 1970 and holds the record for solo diving to 1,000 meters. She is presently National Geographic's Explorer in Residence and leader of the Sustainable Sea Expeditions.

Yasemin Dalkilic from Turkey, who started out on scuba and then became the first Muslim champion freediver (breath-hold diving) is a prime example of success in the realm of females in the diving world. In 2000, Yasemin set 3 World Records in a period of 10 days in the most spectacular categories of freediving. The dives took place in the town of Bodrum, in southern Turkey. While the record to 120 meters made her the female freediver



"credit/copyright © 2006 truXoft - published with permissions" where the link points to <http://ApneaBase.org>



and underwater photography and also meet other women with similar interests. There are so many different diving environments to experience world-wide, from tropical islands to ice diving, to caves and also deep wreck diving, to whale shark watching.

PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors), is a worldwide recognised training agency that specializes in recreational dive training, and you can find a PADI registered dive centre almost anywhere in the world. Since its

inception in 1966, more than 10 million people have become certified divers through the PADI training system, of which only 28% are women.

For some women, diving around other men, or male instructors, can be intimidating or also interfere with cultural or religious beliefs. I decided to start a Women Only initiative as a drive to get more women in the UAE to participate in diving by providing all female classes and an environment where women can feel comfortable without unnecessary onlookers who make some women feel uncomfortable.

I would like to welcome any woman to come and experience the realm of diving, and they can start as young as eight years old. There are also specialised courses, for example women interested in marine biology can learn the Fish Identification Speciality course or Underwater Naturalist Course. There is also a Wreck speciality course which is ideal for our coastline here in the UAE as it is dotted with wrecks which have some interesting history behind them.

To enquire about booking your first diving experience, or if you want to continue your diving education and participate in other courses, please contact me.



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Sara-Lise Haith

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PO BOX 213677, Dubai, UAE



Lejaine, our customized motor sailing schooner

ARABIAN DIVER

Ever feel like escaping from the hustle and bustle of the city? Well, **Arabian Diver** offers a unique concept by fusing together 5 star luxury with scuba diving excursions.

Arabian Diver, based in Ras Al Khaimah, represents a number of world-renowned, innovative associations such as PADI, IANTD, MSF, and brands such as Beuchat and Cochran which compliment **Arabian Diver** in offering solutions for company excursions, holiday seekers, and youth contingencies.

The company employs an adventurous team with experience ranging from Technical Instructor, to Master Chef, to Marine Biologist. Our team is committed in seeing that every guest is completely satisfied by attending to those personal touches that each guest seeks.

DIVING IN RAS AL KHAIMAH

The UAE waters host over 1/3 of the world's 80 species of whales and dolphins, among 700 fish species and 4 species of turtles reported to have nesting areas around Ras Al Khaimah.

Most coral reefs and coral formations are found in areas between 7 to 12 meters deep along the coast, making it suitable for snorkellers, beginner divers and for those interested in macro fauna photography. Stingrays, moray eels, lizardfish, scorpion fish and stonefish, schools of yellowtail barracudas and Indian mackerels are always spotted in these dive sites.

For adventure divers, Ras Al Khaimah offers a series of wrecks found between 20 and 40 meters depths. Acting as artificial reefs, these wrecks host from the large Malabar grouper to the small hawk fish, schools of snappers, a large variety of invertebrates and the occasional visitor from the blue.

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THE KOC DIVE TEAM

Written by Capt. Mohammed Al-Basry, Supervisor, Marine Operations, Kuwait Oil Company



Capt. Mohammed Al-Basry

The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Dive Team was formed in 2005. The idea of setting up a diving team of volunteers arose from a group of KOC employees in the Marine Operations Department who wanted to develop and rehabilitate the reefs and help the marine environment.

The idea was adopted by the Management of KOC which raised environmental

awareness in the company. It became part of KOC's social responsibility in various sectors since it was in line with the company's aim to preserve, develop and rehabilitate the natural resources of Kuwait.

KOC Management provided the dive team with the equipment and logistics to create the biggest artificial marine colony in Kuwait. The project was started in January 2006 and the study of the location, size, shape and cost of the colony began.

The marine colony is a group of artificial reefs called reef balls.

They are made of a special, marine-friendly concrete and come in different shapes and sizes. They are mainly used to restore ailing coral reefs and to create new habitats where the fish can hide and lay their eggs. The location for the colony, approximately 50,000m² in size, has no aquatic life so a decision was made to nourish the ecological system with the proposed deployment of 1,000 reef balls.

The location also has a water temperature ideal for the reproduction of fish, corals and shellfish and is free from underwater oil production pipelines, crafts and tanker traffic and has a depth of 7 to 9 metres with good visibility. The most important feature of the location is that it is secured by the Coast Guard all year round.

The KOC Dive Team currently consists of ten certified divers, but more volunteers will be trained to help in this giant effort.

The KOC Dive team joined EDA as they believed that EDA has the resources, experience and the knowledge in the field of marine environment. The KOC dive team thanks EDA for their interest and support on the marine colony project.

Capt. Mohammed Al-Basry

EDA member # 749

Email: mbasry@kockw.com



FIRST REGIONAL **MARINE CONSERVATION** FORUM HELD IN ABU DHABI

By Kathleen Russell, Al Masaood Marine and Engineering

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates played host to the first region-wide Marine Conservation Forum from 11th-14th September 2006 under the patronage of the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water. The forum focused on the regional cooperation on the conservation of coral reefs and endangered marine turtles in the Arabian Gulf. The forum was organized by Emirates Wildlife Society - World Wildlife Foundation (EWS-WWF) and saw the attendance of over 80 environmental experts, government officials, marine specialists and NGOs.

Participating countries from Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Yemen presented their status reports and conservation efforts on coral reefs and marine turtles at the forum.

It was highlighted that the health of the coral reef systems in the Gulf has declined. Abu Dhabi, UAE corals showed signs of resilience despite the wide temperature fluctuations. Corals in this region have showed active signs of regeneration. However, there are still corals which have not recovered from these environmental stresses.

Countries also reported that marine turtles regularly occur in the Arabian Gulf waters. Of the seven species, the Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) are most common. Occasionally, the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and Olive Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) have been sighted. Turtle habitats, nesting grounds and foraging sites are declining in this region and more conservation efforts are needed to save the turtles and their habitat. Oman has reported the second largest turtle nesting population in the world, which is of economical and cultural significance.

Recommendations from the forum included a reform in environmental impact assessment, strengthening the ties and roles between national environmental laws and environmental protection agencies and more involvement from the stakeholders like environmental NGOs, fishermen, developers and others. Other recommendations included a regional collaboration and communication between national and regional conservation organizations. This would include public awareness campaigns involving media and participatory and outreach programs. The forum is the first step towards regional cooperation in marine conservation efforts involving environmental bodies, NGOs and stakeholders in the Arabian Gulf.

"Marine turtles and coral reefs play important ecological, economic, recreational and cultural roles in the Gulf region. However, uncontrolled coastal development, destruction and alteration of turtle habitats, as well as poaching, illegal trade and pollution are having an adverse impact on the marine ecosystem," said Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Director of WWF's office in the United Arab Emirates.

Dr Susan Lieberman, Director of WWF's Global Species Programme and the Forum's lead facilitator also highlighted that, **"it is in the interest of investors to also invest in the environment, especially as it is the very attractiveness of the area that brings tourism and business to the country."**

The main sponsor of the forum was First Gulf Bank, while Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) and TOTAL were the co-sponsors with Dolphin Energy as a support sponsor of the forum. More information on the forum can be found on: <http://www.panda.org>



EWS WWF MCF group



EWS WWF MCF speakers



Dignitaries at inauguration



Discussion underway

DIVERS AT THE **HIGHEST ALTITUDE**

By Vanessa Nanty, EDA Member



At 5600 metres, summiters on top of Kala Pathar with Everest in the background

We've all experienced the excitement of the bottom of the seas; now, how about we check out the top of the world (or try to anyway)? I'm not talking about diving at altitude but actually keeping our heads above water and trekking to the bottom of the top of the world - Everest Base Camp.

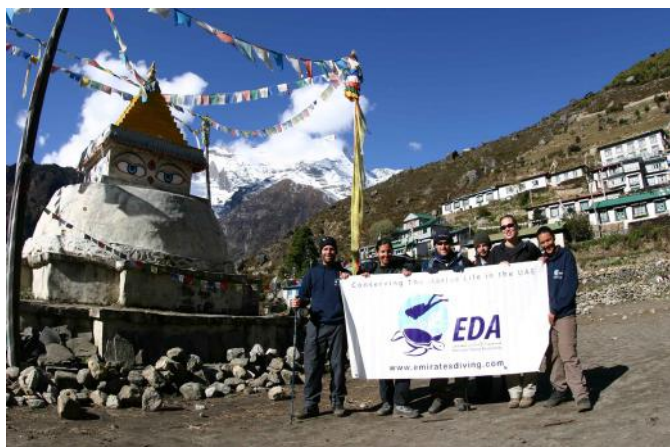
That was the plan when 3 weeks ago, I joined 6 of my friends and headed for Kathmandu for 14 days of trekking. Three of us are proud EDA members and to thank EDA for its continuous support, we decided to promote the association to everyone and anyone who would listen along our trip.

Our troop resembled a mini United Nations with Kay Vosloo (South Africa), Laura Barker (UK), Cassidy Woods (Malta), Jason Smith (Ireland), Amelie Zeigmout (France), Ben Barker (UK) and myself, Vanessa Nanty (Seychelles). Our every whim was handled by Absolute Adventures and I would strongly encourage anyone who wishes to attempt this insane trek not to do it alone, but to gather your like-minded friends and have this experienced operator organise everything for you. We did not have to worry about anything other than breathing and taking that next step and believe me, that was enough to think about once we were above 4,000m.

Everest Base Camp lies at 5,300m; approximately 3,550m lower than Mount Everest. You can't actually see Everest from Base Camp so we planned to climb 250m more to stand on top of Kala Pathar (5,550m) for outstanding views of all the giants of our world, as we were promised.

On Friday the 13th of October, we started our journey to Kathmandu. This is a bustling city; dirty and poor but full of life and color. We were met by Himalayan Holidays with traditional flower garlands and were transferred to the 4-star Everest Hotel. We then spent the first two days in this lively city visiting the Monkey Temple, dodging snake charmers and merchants and holding our breaths as we posed for souvenir pictures with the Sirdars (holy men)! It's a must to visit the Living Goddess - a gorgeous 8-year-old girl who is confined to her home until her term as 'goddess' ends. The locals seek her for her blessing and very few tourists can see her unless she chooses to allow you a glimpse through the window but no photos are allowed.

Since we knew of the severity of poverty in Kathmandu, we decided to try to help a small orphanage run by a local family. Thanks to the parents and students of Horizon School in Dubai, we collected bags full of soft toys, coloring books and stationery. It may not be deemed as much but for those 32 children, it meant the world. Seeing the faces of those kids as we opened the bags of goodies was priceless and brought tears to our eyes. The orphanage is assisted by volunteers who stay for about 3 months at a time. It is run-down with two bedrooms; one for the boys and one for the girls. Divide 32 kids into bunk beds in 2 small rooms and you'll realize the extent to which this orphanage is struggling. Every month the family struggle to pay their rent, a mere USD 100, so we covered two months for them and hopefully will be able to generate more in the coming months.



At 5600 metres, summiters on top of Kala Pathar with Everest in the background

A 20-seater twin propeller plane carried us to a hill village called Lukla. The runway here is unique. Landing on a 200m long runway, which is on a gradient of about 20 degrees, is something you don't want to do every day. Needless to say, a sigh of relief could be heard from every single passenger and perhaps, even the pilot, after we landed!

Lukla is where we met our team of 18 experienced guides, Sherpas and cooks for the first time and I remember being shocked by their age! Some of the boys were not even 15 and they would be carrying everything up the mountain for us. All we had to carry, on a daily basis, was our daypack with the bare essentials. The Sherpas would carry everything else including the toilet tents! They made use of the yaks but a lot of the stuff was carried on their own backs.

Day one of our trek was the easiest part of the trip as we would actually descend by 200m to the first camp spot - Phakding. But from day one, we knew that it was important to set our pace. Walk slowly, and then walk slower than that, and you will make it to the top. It always amazed us to see many other trekkers zooming past. They couldn't possibly have been able to appreciate the amazing scenery. The peacefulness of the trip is what stays with you - there's no noise, just the river rushing by and the yak bells ringing as they rush past you.

We trekked for about 3 hours that day but before we reached our camp, we would have to negotiate with the Maoists to let us through their checkpoint. Everyone has to pay a 'small fee' to them no matter your belief. They were friendly but tough to negotiate with. We declared that we were students with very little money, raising funds for an orphanage full of abandoned Maoists children! It worked... eventually.

Our daily routine was fairly constant, starting at 6am and trekking for 6-7 hours each day with a lunch stop in between. Because of this, we were usually tucked in by 8pm. It may sound monotonous but when you're in a group, there's always something happening to make the day different. We laughed every single day of our trip and that is what makes climbing with friends fabulous.

There were tough days though when you would be climbing continuously for 3 hours, when your legs would scream in pain and your whole body would curse you for booking that holiday and you would think... *'Why didn't I just book a live aboard trip to Maldives?'* There were often tears but as a group, we stuck together and pulled each other up. It doesn't matter if you're the slowest; sometimes others need you to be slow to help them on.

Many trekkers turn at 3000m so your mind has to start playing tricks on you to keep your body going - I found counting all the way up helped to distract me from the climb.

The most humble part of our trip was when we visited the Tengboche Buddhist monastery and had our prayer flags blessed by the 3rd in ranking after the Dalai Lama. These were hung in Periche where the wind carried our prayers to the heavens. We attended the monastery's morning prayers as well and although it was freezing, the chanting and the music was mesmerizing.

As we passed the 4000m mark, breathing became harder and doing simple things like slipping on our boots was exhausting. The advantage for divers though, is that we are used to restrictive breathing. Our oxygen levels were all high but we still had to look out for any signs of altitude sickness, which usually consists of headaches, insomnia, vomiting, irregular breathing, lack of coordination and balance. Just as if we were hit by nitrogen narcosis and we would head back up, with altitude sickness, you would make your way back down as fast as your legs could take you. Unfortunately for the group, 5 of us couldn't make it to the top because of this or other factors. I got hit at 5024m and I promise it's not pleasant. You're exhausted, your head hurts and the worst part is knowing you've failed so close to the end. But you can't take the risk of pushing your body. As someone who comes from a country where the highest peak is less than 1000m, I know that I did extremely well to pass 5000m!

We were thrilled that Jason and Cass made it to the top of Kala Pathar where they held up our EDA banner, bringing Emirates Divers one step closer to the top of the world.

Climbing to Everest Base Camp was one of the most challenging and fulfilling journeys we all had experienced. The beauty of Nepal, the colors, the peacefulness and the friendliness of its people made the journey an unforgettable one. To stand at 5000m and look up to see the peaks of the world climbing another 3000m above you, is, by far, the most humble experience you will ever feel. This journey was a real eye-opener for us all. Who would have thought that we could be this strong? We are small and at 5000m, we are minute. Give this journey a try, it will be one you will never forget.

We would recommend contacting Paul Oliver from Absolute Adventure: www.adventure.ae for more information on their trips. And for a taste of Nepal, visit: www.travel2images.com for Ben Barker's stunning pictures.

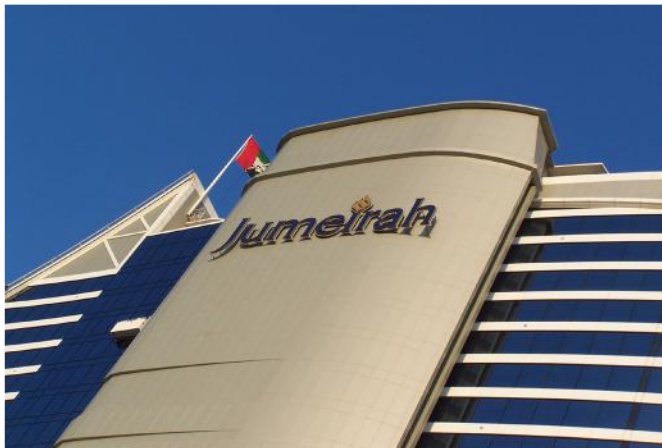


Photo by Ben Barker

IDC 2006



IDC Group



The second PADI Instructor Development Course and Instructor Examination of 2006 took place over the 25th October to the 6th November. The PADI IDC is the diving industry's most respected instructor development course and just getting to the PADI IDC is a respectable achievement in itself. The Recent IDC took place at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel Conference Centre and the IE was audited by PADI Instructor Examiner Rob Scammell who came over from the UK.

Below are the successful PADI professionals that received a **PADI Assistant Instructor, PADI Instructor** or **PADI IDC Staff Instructor** rating.

Devon Baker

Thomas Powell

Sue Evers

Steve Wright

Barbara Lang-Lenton

Rabih Harfouche

Wael Al Hamarna

Mohamed Kazemi

Genie King

Christa Loustawt

Ali Tabrsi

Mohsin

Greg Kelaart-Courtney

John Hill (PADI IDC Staff Instructor Divers Down)

Dave Fursey (PADI IDC Staff Instructor The Pavilion Dive Centre)



Phil O'Shea and Ernst Van Der Poll

The Pavilion Dive Centre and associated Instructors would like to give every candidate a big hand for all their dedication and hard work. We look forward to seeing them in action soon and encourage them to be ambassadors for the sport in the UAE or their respective teaching territories.

Congratulations and well done to all.

Phil O'Shea & Ernst Van Der Poll

PADI Course Directors

The Pavilion Dive Centre

PADI Gold Palm IDC Centre S-3478

National Geographic Dive Centre

Project AWARE Foundation Official Partner



IDC classroom



Christa Loustawt



Genie King



Mohsin



Mohamed Kazemi



Rabih Harfouche



Sue Evers



Thomas Powell



Steve Wright



Devon Baker



Wael Al Hamarna

DIVING TIPS FOR VISITORS

1. Dive only with EDA-registered dive centers to ensure safe diving:
<http://www.emiratesdiving.com/DiveCenters.htm>
2. If you're into wreck-diving, dive at the West Coast (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah); if you're looking for rich tropical marine life, dive at the East Coast (Fujairah, Khor Fakkan, Dibba) and Musandam.
3. Follow some dive/eco tourist tips from **PROJECT A.W.A.R.E.**:
 - Resist the urge to collect souvenirs; don't remove anything that is part of the natural environment (e.g. coral).
 - Understand and respect underwater life; enjoy nature but don't chase or touch animals.
 - Report environmental damage to authorities. EDA will appreciate receiving this information through the EDA registered dive center; you can also download the forms from:
<http://www.emiratesdiving.com/SafetyMission.htm>
 - Patronize locally owned businesses, but avoid items made from endangered species, threatened species, coral or tropical hardwoods.
 - Leave the site cleaner than when you found it.
4. Provide feedback to Emirates Diving Association on any problems you may have on diving in the UAE.
Email: edadiver@emirates.net.ae
Call: 04-3939390

DOLPHIN FACTS

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT DOLPHINS?

- Decrease, reuse and recycle your waste so it doesn't end up in the sea.
- Support all efforts aiming to properly dispose toxic wastes like paint and boat oil, rather than pouring them down the boat's drain.
- Support civil organizations that protect dolphins.

THINGS NOT TO DO WHEN DOLPHIN WATCHING:

- Shout, whistle and use shakers or noise-making devices.
- Use camera flashes.
- Touch, chase or feed the dolphins.

FUN FACTS ABOUT DOLPHINS:

- A group of dolphins is called a "pod".
- Dolphins can have 8 to 250 teeth, depending on the species.
- Dolphins use "echolocation" to find food. Echolocation means that the dolphins send out sounds and these sounds bounce off things (like fish) and echo back to the dolphins, indicating how far or how big the objects are. Only dolphins and bats use echolocation.

ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM IN BAHRAIN SIGNS AN MOU WITH EDA

The Environmental Citizenship Program (ECP), under the umbrella of Bahrain Women's Society (BWS), recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Emirates Diving Association (EDA) which serves as an official partnership between the two parties and signifies collaboration between both organizations for joint activities, events and projects based in the UAE and other areas of operation.

ECP is operated by a team of Youths aiming to address environment issues and threats and communicate the principles of the earth charter in a creative and inspiring way. It has been one of the leading programs in Bahrain that aims to make a change in the environment aspect. BWS took the initiative to adopt and spread the Earth Charter concepts through ECP.

ECP also established *“Creativity in Environmental Culture”*, an innovative program using an environmental mascot as an inventive approach to tackle environmental issues. This mascot was named *“Waness”*, meaning joyfulness. The team also works closely with the Ministry of Education which authorized a series of workshops to be delivered to high school students in an attempt to raise awareness regarding the earth charter and other environmental issues.

ECP also works with children through its *“my Environmental Unit”* initiative which targets children in kindergarten. The program is presented as fun, enjoyable workshops or through the curriculum that was designed for the unit.

The MOU signing was held during the regional consultation forum of civil society for the West Asia region, which was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the Kingdom of Bahrain on October 31st and November 1st at the Regency Hotel. The consultation forum, attended by representatives from West Asia and North Africa, was in collaboration with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and was held in preparation for the Global Civil Society Forum to be conducted in Nairobi next year.

**“ECP IS OPERATED BY A
TEAM OF YOUTHS AIMING
TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENT
ISSUES AND THREATS AND
COMMUNICATE THE PRINCIPLES
OF THE EARTH CHARTER IN A
CREATIVE AND INSPIRING WAY”**



Signing the MOU in UNEP's presence



Presenting Clean Up T-shirts

UNDERWATER CURRENTS

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 has initiated talks with the Coast Guard on the issues cited below. The Coast Guard has been very agreeable during the meeting and would like to discuss the issues further with EDA. EDA appreciates the Coast Guard's efforts to support EDA while doing their job of implementing the law to protect UAE waters.)



PROBLEMS ON SAILING PERMITS

Whilst we see lots of involvement from the local diving community in attempting to steer the future of our diving in a safe and organized direction - facilitated to a degree by the EDA - it may be beneficial to look at ways of making access to our diving easier, particularly for those of us who launch our boats regularly at different harbours. This may not **affect** all operators but would be beneficial to all, I'm sure.

Certainly we have constant problems where the Coast Guard of both the U.A.E. and Oman are concerned, in that U.A.E. registered boats are not permitted in Omani waters without proper permits, which need to be obtained through the Omani consulate in advance.

This is a long and drawn out affair in which all crew members' passport copies need to be supplied and the prerequisite forms must be typed in Arabic. On completion, the forms are submitted and a permit **may** be issued (although not necessarily for the dates requested) - at the discretion of the Minister in control.

In some U.A.E harbours, specific "Permits to Sail" are required to be faxed to the Coast Guard Headquarters. Only when a Coast Guard stamped permit is received are we able to confirm that a trip can happen.

In other U.A.E harbours, the permits do not seem to be required, although boats that are being launched from different local harbours have to provide different levels of information. Some only request to see the boat registration while others demand a full list of passengers and their IDs, depending on the person on duty and whether or not there's an "R" in the month.

As we are all registered with the EDA as Dive Operators, would it not be advantageous to have a permit for each of our boats that can be produced at **any** of the harbours to enable departure without delays (as this can be dangerous to divers in the summer months) and without having to provide lists of crew and passengers in advance?

We could all carry our EDA cards as proof of qualification and residence, in case they were asked for.

Hopefully...

Brian King

Diving Officer
Sharjah Wanderers Dive Club
BSAC 406

2 LUCKY EDA MEMBERS WIN FREE TRIP TO MALAYSIA



Malaysian Tourism Board and Emirates Diving Association (EDA) recently announced the two winners of the "Win a free trip to Malaysia" contest which was launched in the "EDA U.A.E. Dive Guide", the special August edition issue of the EDA Newsletter "Divers For the Environment".

Ms. Leena Abbas from Dubai and Mr. Vance Stevens from Abu Dhabi were declared as winners. They will each get a return ticket to Malaysia on economy class plus 3 nights / 4 days hotel stay with breakfast.

H.E Counsel General of Malaysia in Dubai Mr. Nadzri Shamsudin presented the awards on behalf of the winners to Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi, EDA's Director for Environment & Research Department, in the presence of Mr. Syed Muhadzir Jamallulil, Director of Malaysian Tourism Board.

Malaysia has one of the top 10 best diving spots in the world - Sipadan. EDA and Tourism Malaysia had organized several trips to this marvelous island and some EDA members could attest to the magnificence and abundance of the marine life there!

Malaysia is a diving heaven for all divers. The diversity of the marine life can astonish even the most jaded diver and safety standards are very high. In addition, one can get the chance to meet some very friendly people.

For more information about Tourism Malaysia, please contact the Marketing Manager Mr. Mohamad Ibrahim Masri in Dubai:

Malaysian Tourism Board

Suite no 9, Mezzanin Floor

Al Safeena Bldg

Dubai, UAE

Tel : 971- 4 33 77 578

Fax : 971- 4 3353 318

www.tourism.gov.my



MEET THE WINNERS

Mr. VANCE STEVENS, American, EDA member #380



I teach Computing at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi.

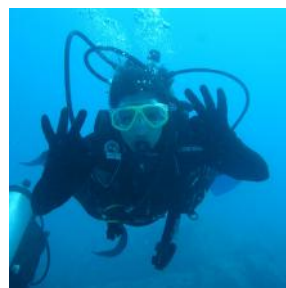
I'm a PADI dive instructor (OWSI 61481). I've been diving since 1966. I have about 750 logged dives but didn't start logging until the mid 1980's.

I've been in the UAE since 1997. I was in Oman for ten years before that. I have dived in most feasible locations in both countries, and I've made numerous trips to dive spots all over the world. Some of my favorite spots were the unspoiled ones back in the 1960's like Florida Keys, the Bahamas, and Cozumel. My favorite spot is Blue Corner in Pulau. Pulau Corner ranks a close second. My favorite destinations include Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Sipadan in Malaysia.

I have a website where I maintain information about diving, especially locally in the UAE and Oman:

<http://www.vancestevens.com/scubadiv.htm>

Ms. LEENA ABBAS, UAE National, EDA member #402



I am a Marketing Manager at HSBC Bank Middle East Ltd.

I'm an Advanced Open Water diver and I have been diving since 2005.

My involvement with EDA started from work, since HSBC sponsors and supports various EDA activities. My first EDA participation was at 2005's East Coast Clean Up and my first overseas diving trip with EDA was in Thailand's Phi Phi Island for a post-Tsunami Clean Up. Ever since, I've been involved in environmental-related diving expeditions and training which include the RMP Programme and the Mooring Buoy Project. Apart from diving in the UAE and Musandam, I have so far dove in Malaysia (Sipadan), Sri Lanka, Thailand and most recently, Seychelles. My best experience so far was snorkeling with Whale Sharks in Seychelles. I'm planning to take the Rescue Diver course soon.



JOIN REEF CHECK AND LEARN HOW TO MAKE MONEY BY PROTECTING YOUR REEFS

Want to save the reefs while enhancing your dive business? Learn how by joining Reef Check EcoAction Initiative. This initiative will introduce dive professionals to the comprehensive Reef Check EcoAction program, a fully supported environmental program designed to drive business to dive operators while providing a financially sustainable program to help protect our reef resources.

“Reef Check EcoAction training programs offer dive operators and resort owners the chance to make participation in environmental education financially self-sustaining,” said Dr. Gregor Hodgson, Reef Check’s Executive Director. *“Industry research indicates that educated and informed divers are frequent divers. Reef Check’s scientifically tested and proven programs are specifically designed to keep divers travelling and getting back in the water. Its fun, easy to do and will help make environmental sustainability profitable.”* Market research shows the program can be sold for a suggested retail cost of up to \$350.

Founded in 1996, the non-profit **Reef Check Foundation** was established to reverse the international coral reef crisis by using a business model to self-finance conservation. Reef Check programs provide ecologically sound and economically sustainable solutions for local dive businesses, governments, and communities to scientifically monitor, maintain, and restore reefs globally. Currently active in over 80 countries and with annual grants totalling over a million dollars, the Reef Check Foundation has trained thousands of active divers in its methodology and has been the recipient of numerous prestigious national and international environmental awards for its work as the United Nations’ official community-based reef monitoring program. A registered 501c3 non-profit, the organization is headquartered in Pacific Palisades, California.

Remember, educated divers are involved divers. Reef Check keeps them diving and travelling.

Become a Reef Check Certified resort or Dive Operator today.

For more information visit the Reef Check website:

www.reefcheck.org

Or e-mail at:

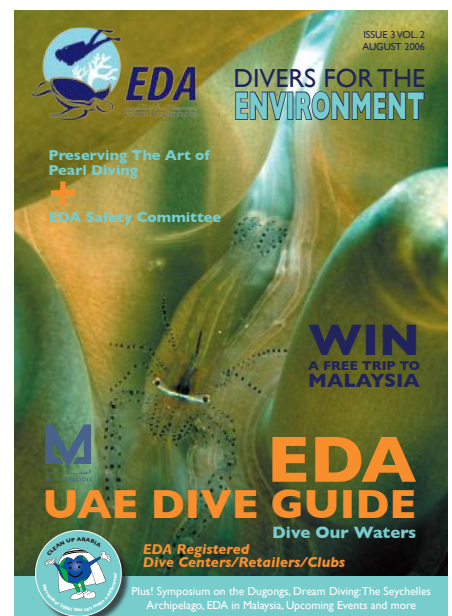
ecoaction@reefcheck.org

Note: EDA is the UAE Reef Check Coordinator



PAST ISSUES

To view and download all our past issues, please go to www.emiratesdiving.com



UPCOMING EVENTS

EDA SOCIAL

EDA Social is an event to welcome new members and to thank active current members for their support of EDA's activities. It will also include discussions 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.

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).

DIVE MIDDLE EAST EXHIBITION (DMEX) 2007, 13-17 March 2007

DMEX, the largest international event in the Middle East for the diving industry, will take place within the Dubai International Boat Show 2007 at the Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi. Exhibitors include dive centres from around the region, companies supplying diving equipment, supplies and services, as well as tourism bodies and dive travel specialists. The exhibition will also host a series of demonstrations on the latest diving specialties, training programmes and projects taking place around the region. The current diving trends in the UAE will also be a show feature along with educational events aimed at children and dive enthusiasts.

CLEAN UP ARABIA

November 2007



Chairperson Mr Faraj Butti Al Muhairbi

Vice Chairperson Mr Essa Al Ghurair

The Secretary General Mr Jamal Bu Hannad

Financial Director Mr. Khalfan Khalfan Al Mohiari

Head of the Technical Committee Mr. Omar Al Huraiz

Head of the Scientific Committee Mr. Mohd Al Salfa

Technical Adviser Mr. Ahmed bin Byat

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EDA Secretary

Erna Magbanua

Graphic Designer

Ally Landes

MISSION STATEMENT

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

LEGISLATION

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

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

CONTACT DETAILS

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Email: edadiver@emirates.net.ae, projects@emiratesdiving.com

Website: <http://emiratesdiving.com/>



Good Food, Good Life