

# CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance

## MESOAMERICA MATCHING GRANT GOAL EXCEEDED!

Thanks to the generous support of members like you, CORAL has exceeded its goal to match the gift pledged by an anonymous donor to expand our voluntary standards project along the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. Standards have a long history of improving service quality and safety in many industries, and CORAL's goal has been to bring these same improvements to marine protected area (MPA) management in our project sites in Mexico, Belize, and Honduras.

According to the terms of the matching grant, we had until September 15 to raise \$25,000. Not only did we raise more than \$25,000 to meet our goal and receive the matching gift, but one of our donors was so inspired by the matching opportunity that she called Executive Director Brian Huse directly to make a \$50,000 donation for our work in Mesoamerica. That means we raised more than \$100,000 to help protect the second largest coral reef system in the world!

This dedicated infusion of resources will allow us to support the expansion of existing programs, as well as develop new conservation initiatives in our three project sites (described below). Thank you, CORAL members, for making our summer fundraising appeal such a wonderful success.



Flamingo Tongue (*Cyphoma gibbosum*), Cozumel, Mexico  
Photo by Julie Bennett

**BELIZE:** The first CORAL Reef Leadership Network training will launch in Belize in November. CORAL is continuing its outreach to tour guide associations and MPA managers throughout Belize to build support for turning the voluntary standards into law. The Kids in Action program, created during a Conservation in Action workshop and funded by a CORAL microgrant, continues to educate local students about the importance of preserving coral reef, mangrove, and sea grass ecosystems. Three active mooring buoy projects—in Belize City, Placencia, and San Pedro—continue to reduce anchor damage caused by marine recreation activities. The Environmental Walk-Through program—launched in Belize City early this year—is focusing primarily on dive and snorkel operators who service cruise ship tourists. And in partnership with Conservation International and



Working Together to Keep  
Coral Reefs Alive

CORAL is the only international organization working exclusively to save coral reefs. We provide education, tools, and inspiration to help local communities become passionate environmental stewards. Together we develop well-managed marine protected areas and sustainable businesses to benefit coral reefs and people.

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the Healthy Reefs for Healthy People initiative, CORAL is continuing its biophysical monitoring of local reefs to determine the extent to which adoption of the voluntary standards for good practices improves reef health.

**HONDURAS:** With the support of a CORAL microgrant, the Roatan Marine Park Association is moving forward with phase two of its park infrastructure improvements, including installation of fishing mooring buoys to reduce anchor damage and channel markers to better manage boat traffic, reduce propeller damage, and eliminate groundings. New field representative Jenny Myton will train in the Environmental Walk-Through program in October.

**MEXICO:** All of our ongoing work in Mexico falls under the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI), a partnership between CORAL; Conservation International; and Mexico-based NGO, Amigos de Sian Ka'an. The CORAL Reef Leadership Network has been adopted as the official training program for the 1,200 tour guides who operate in the Cozumel Reefs National Park. This recent agreement was endorsed by the mayor, the port captain, and the comandante of the Navy. The Environmental Walk-Through program, in which CORAL staff assesses tour operators for good environmental practices and makes recommendations for improvements according to the voluntary standards, is ongoing and expanding.

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"Working Together to Keep Coral Reefs Alive"

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*CORAL Current* is published quarterly by the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), an IRS 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. Copies of our audited financial statement are available at [www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org) or by phone request.

For comments, questions, or contributions to *CORAL Current*, please email us at [communications@coral.org](mailto:communications@coral.org).

Roatan, Honduras  
Photo by Julie Bennett



# BREAKING NEWS FROM CORAL'S PROJECT SITES

## MESOAMERICA

**BELIZE:** In September, the Placencia Mooring Masters, a community group funded in 2006 and 2008 by CORAL micro-grants, gathered a volunteer crew of twenty to spend six days on the water strengthening mooring buoys, replacing worn out lines, and adding new moorings at key sites. Mark Castillo, project coordinator for the Belize City Mooring Wrasses—another mooring group funded by CORAL, Conservation International, and the Belize Tourism Board—participated in the maintenance as part of a peer-exchange program. Mark will bring lessons learned in Placencia to the Belize City project.

**MEXICO:** The Cozumel Reefs National Park has recently formed a public advisory committee to increase community input and involvement in the management of the park. At director Ricardo Gomez Lozano's recommendation and by unanimous support of the committee members, CORAL has been made an official member of the committee. As a component of MARTI, CORAL will help facilitate local meetings for the purpose of assisting the committee with the planning and execution of local conservation initiatives. Since graduating from the CORAL Reef Leadership Network training this spring, Cozumel's trainers have taught five Sustainable Marine Recreation workshops to nearly 100 local tour guides, boat captains, and fishermen.

**HONDURAS:** As part of its efforts to increase community involvement in and support for the Roatan Marine Park, CORAL will facilitate a public forum to evaluate current challenges faced by the marine park, identify key supporters within the community, and define partner roles and responsibilities.

## INDO-PACIFIC

**FIJI:** CORAL program manager Bryan Dias will launch the first CORAL Reef Leadership Network training program in Fiji early next year. Watch for stories and photographs celebrating the Namena Marine Reserve's official anchor-free zone—to be completed this fall—in coming issues of *CORAL Current*.

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG):** CORAL has hired Jennifer Baing to be our full-time field representative in PNG. Born and raised in PNG and having worked for both World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace, Jennifer brings excellent conservation experience to CORAL. Jennifer lived with her partner and young son in the capital city of Port Moresby, but moved her family to Madang in September.

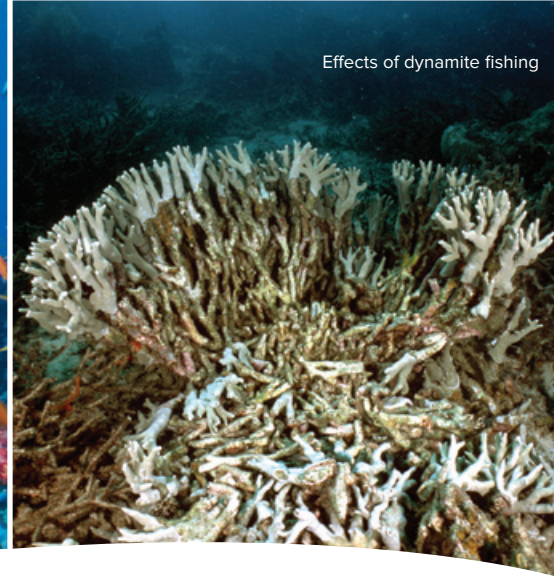
**RAJA AMPAT:** CORAL has hired Naneng Setiasih to be a part-time field representative in Indonesia. Based in Bali, Naneng is the executive director of Yayasan Reef Check Indonesia, an NGO whose work currently focuses on coral reefs in north Bali. In the new partnership, CORAL and Reef Check will collaborate in Bali and Misool, applying CORAL's methodology and broadening our reach in the region.

**HAWAII:** At the end of August, CORAL graduated the first members of its CORAL Reef Leadership Network training program in Maui. CORAL is gearing up to present the training on the Kailua-Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawaii later this fall. The Adopt-a-Sign program, involving numerous Hawaii stakeholders and jointly funded by the Hawaii Tourism Authority and CORAL, has expanded to Kona. Three reef etiquette signs are soon to be installed and several others are in the works.

Scalefin Anthias (*Pseudanthias squamipinnis*), Magenta Slender Anthias (*Luzonichthys waitei*), and Soft Coral (*Dendronepthea*), Fiji  
Photo by Jeff Yonover



Effects of dynamite fishing



# USCRTF Issues Call to Action

In August, CORAL's Conservation Programs Director, Rick MacPherson, was the keynote speaker at a sustainable tourism and green marketing workshop held during the 20th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) meeting in Kona, Hawaii.

The USCRTF was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. The task force, which comprises leaders of twelve federal agencies, seven U.S. states, territories, commonwealths, and three freely associated states, helps build partnerships, strategies, and support for on-the-ground action to conserve coral reefs.

At the close of the meeting, the members of the task force published the following call to action, which recognizes the importance of threat reduction and resiliency in coral reef protection. CORAL's long-term approach to reef conservation responds to threats by building the capacity of local communities to protect and manage their coral reefs. Our programs raise awareness about the importance of marine protected areas in combating reef decline, build capacity to effectively manage the reefs, and foster sustainable tourism and other businesses that reinforce reef conservation with financial independence. By reducing threats on the local level, CORAL gives reefs a chance to build resilience to the large-scale threats described below.

## The Time to Act Is Now

Healthy coral reefs are among the most biologically diverse and economically valuable ecosystems on Earth. The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) recognizes the urgent need for action to address the state of coral reef management and science, and to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystem health to make reefs more resilient in the face of climate change.

In the United States and around the world, coral reef ecosystems provide economic and environmental benefits worth billions of dollars in the form of food, jobs, natural products, recreation, and shoreline protection. The beauty and biodiversity of coral reefs attract millions of tourists, making tourism the top industry in many coral reef areas. With 10.5 million people living adjacent to a

U.S. coral reef in mainland coastal communities or on islands (U.S. Census 2002), coral reefs are an integral part of the culture, heritage, and economies of these regions. With effective management, healthy reef ecosystems can continue to provide these valuable services to current and future generations.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that increasing atmospheric greenhouse gases are linked to rising global temperatures and ocean acidification. Both of these factors have important consequences for coral reefs. The Group of Eight (G8) and leaders of the major economies agree that the deteriorating effects of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment require cutting emissions to rein in global warming. Science is clear that coral reefs can exhibit greater resilience to climate change when not impacted by other chronic stress factors such as illegal fishing and deteriorating water quality.

It is clear that the USCRTF, with partners, must significantly increase our collective effort to address the factors over which

we can exercise control. The USCRTF must take immediate action to respond to these threats and, in turn, seek to sustain our coral reef ecosystems and the communities that depend upon them.

Coral reefs are teetering on the edge of survival. Adverse effects of fishing, pollution, coastal development, and physical damage further undermine reef health, and consequently, that of the people and ecosystems depending upon them. High levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have produced a lethal combination of hotter and more acidic seawater.

Science has demonstrated that reef communities can recover when they are protected and stressors are removed. Urgent action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the meantime, precious time for coral reef ecosystems can be secured through increased protection from land and marine pollution, unsustainable fishing, development, and other stressors, all of which we know can damage coral health.

**The time to act is now.**

Sergio Sandoval Sr.  
Photo by Julie Bennett



Sergio Sandoval has been diving and photographing the reefs of Cozumel for thirty-seven years. A passionate steward of the fragile underwater environment that sustains his livelihood as a popular dive operator, Sergio is one of CORAL's most valuable—and busiest—partners in Mexico.

It's not enough for Sergio to read scientific studies about the effects of climate change on coral reefs. He sees "the evidence of what's really going on underwater." A mechanical engineer turned dive operator,

## CORAL Partner Spotlight: Sergio Sandoval

Sergio has been photographing the reefs of Cozumel every day for almost four decades. He has witnessed increasing damage to his local reefs from issues related to climate change, as well as rising pollution, overfishing, and staggering increases in tourism. According to Sergio, "There have been big changes in thirty-seven years of diving, and we have to protect our reefs today!"

Providing dive, snorkeling, and fishing services through his company, Aquatic Sports, Sergio integrates subtle lessons about conservation and responsible marine practices into everything he does. Rather than giving his clients a list of no-nos, Sergio's approach encourages people to help him care for Cozumel's beautiful reefs. "You have to be positive," Sergio claims. "Don't tell people what they can't do. Tell them how they can help. The way we treat people is the way we—and the reef—will be treated in return."

In addition to diving every day, Sergio photographs the reef and collects water temperature, current, and reef health data to add to his decades-long survey.

The statistics not only allow him to estimate daily dive conditions for clients, but also provide the evidence he needs to show people how quickly the reefs are degrading. Armed with long-term, firsthand knowledge of his changing local reefs, Sergio has become a well-known and active steward for local environmental sustainability.

As busy as he is, Sergio still finds time to support CORAL and its programs in Cozumel, most recently by participating in CORAL's Environmental Walk-Through program. A humanitarian at heart, Sergio has instilled in his children a passion for the environment and a sense of responsibility to the planet. Sergio's daughter gives up her Saturdays to volunteer in a camp for disadvantaged local kids. And Sergio Jr., who earned a degree in business and has taken over the day-to-day operations at Aquatic Sports, is following in his father's footsteps. Sergio Jr. volunteers his time to protect the local reefs. A newly trained CORAL Reef Leader, Sergio Jr. taught his first workshop in sustainable marine recreation to his fellow tour operators last month. Cozumel's reefs are lucky to have this father-son team on their side.

## CORAL Celebrates IYOR in Hawaii



More than halfway through the International Year of the Reef (IYOR) 2008, CORAL and its partners have joined forces to raise awareness about the threats facing coral reefs in Hawaii. The County of Maui Task Force, a coalition of agencies and nonprofit organizations, worked collectively on a variety of IYOR events.

**CHERISH THE LIVING REEFS:** Held June 22 at the Maui Ocean Center, this evening to celebrate coral reefs drew more than 800 people. Partially sponsored by CORAL and featuring lectures, exhibits, a poster contest, Hawaiian nose flute demonstrations, an invasive species cook-off, a fashion show, and naturalist talks, this successful event kicked off a summer of IYOR outreach activities.

### IYOR OUTREACH STATIONS:

Located at the Maui Ocean Center and Keka'a, a favorite Kaanapali Beach snorkeling spot, these coral reef information booths are staffed every Monday (Maui Ocean Center) and every other Wednesday (Keka'a). At each station, volunteer coordinators answer questions, share reef etiquette guidelines, pass out Making a Difference action guides, and engage visitors in educational games like Are You Smarter than a 5th Grade Coral Polyp?

### SHOPPING BAG GIVEAWAY:

On September 15, volunteer outreach coordinators handed out reusable shopping bags printed with educational messages at Ah Fook's grocery store on Maui. Mayor Charmaine Tavares and Council Member Mike Molina stepped in as guest grocery baggers to bring attention to the importance of saving coral reefs. Shopping bag giveaway events are being scheduled at additional grocery stores on the island.



Shopping bag giveaway  
Photo by Liz Foote



Captain Don  
Photo by CORAL Staff

This summer, CORAL Program Manager Bryan Dias and Conservation Programs Director Rick MacPherson visited Bonaire for Dive into Summer, a series of IYOR 2008 events. Rick and Bryan gave talks and led dives to build coral reef awareness. While on Bonaire, they caught up with local celebrity and conservationist Captain Don. The following profile was contributed by Rob McCaleb, husband of CORAL's board chair, Lyn Ciocca.

When his Hollywood film deal fell through, Donal A. Stewart—known to everyone as *Captain Don*—hoisted his pirate's flag and set sail from San Francisco on the *Valerie Queen*, a 70-foot vintage schooner. On May 21, 1962, Don landed on the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire. With only 63 cents and six scuba tanks, Don set up Bonaire's first dive operation and the Caribbean's largest spear-fishing contest. When the *Valerie Queen* sank in 1963, Don

# Meet Bonaire's Captain Don

By Rob McCaleb

decided to stay on Bonaire. In the forty-five years since, he has become a local legend.

As proprietor of Captain Don's Habitat—an environmentally responsible dive resort—Don established Bonaire's reputation for total diving freedom with 24-hour unlimited access to filled tanks. In the mid 1970s, he formed the Caribbean Underwater Resort Operators (CURO) association to improve reef management, maintain a healthy underwater environment, and protect the island's tourism-based economy. Working with resort owners and the tourism board, Don and the residents of Bonaire formed the first island-wide marine protected area and set about establishing rules for sustainable diving.

A zealous conservationist, scuba diver, and storyteller, and author of six novels and hundreds of short stories, Don has received dozens of international awards for his work. Although he admits to being a ladies' man, his real passion has been for Bonaire and the preservation of its coral reefs.

In one often retold episode, Don punched out a tourist who was breaking and stealing coral. "That was the day we established the Sea Rangers," says Don, "which eventually became the marine park." In another famous encounter, Don took one of his resort guests straight to the airport after repeated warnings went unheeded. "I'm not charging you for the

room or the diving," growled Don. "Just get off our island."

According to Kalli De Meyer, a former CORAL program director and former Bonaire Marine Park director, Don "pretty much single-handedly sold the island on the role that dive tourism could play for the economy, and later on, conservation. He is the founder of the dive industry on Bonaire [and] he is an ardent conservationist."

Today, Bonaire boasts the healthiest reefs in the Caribbean, in large part due to Captain Don's efforts. But like all coral reefs around the world, Bonaire's reefs are suffering from the effects of pollution, overfishing, and increasing development. Don still crusades against sewage and is active in ongoing discussions about how to protect Bonaire's reefs. For his lifelong dedication to the reefs and the people of Bonaire, Captain Don was recently knighted by Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.

Although he's no longer in the middle of the fray, Captain Don is still a fierce steward of Bonaire's reefs. "We are the pioneers of the Earth's last frontier. The coral is all we have," says Don. With his companion of twenty-five years, Janet Thibault, Don currently spends his time gardening, writing, and spinning yarns about the past that, in typical Captain Don fashion, are "guaranteed to be at least 85 percent true."

Read more about Captain Don's work at <http://www.infobonaire.com/captndon/>

## New Development Director Joins CORAL

CORAL welcomes Diana Williams (shown center right with daughters Niulan and Isobel) to its San Francisco staff. Diana brings more than a decade of development experience to CORAL. Most recently, she was director of development at the Head-Royce School in Oakland, and before that she worked for the Environmental Defense Fund. Prior to joining CORAL, Diana traveled with her husband and daughters throughout Southeast Asia for a year, where she did volunteer and fundraising work for a pediatric cardiac surgery organization in Vietnam and a school and orphanage in Laos.



## CORAL Gets Recycling

For the past year, CORAL staffers have been bringing our recyclables home because our San Francisco office building hasn't supported a recycling program. We think it's crucial for CORAL to prioritize the protection and conservation of our local environment, which is why Program Associate Anja Mondragon (shown center right with Development Assistant Elizabeth Curran and Communications Assistant Catherine Nguyen) worked with building management to establish a recycling program. We're pleased to announce that starting in September, CORAL will recycle all of its paper, plastics, bottles, and cans.



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## CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance



# Get Your 2009 CORAL Calendar!

When you donate \$35 or more to CORAL, we'll send you a copy of our gorgeous 2009 wall calendar. Featuring twelve months of beautiful underwater photography donated by professional and amateur photographers, the 2009 CORAL calendar is our best one yet. We've got dueling Blue Ribbon Eels in January, an inquisitive Hawksbill Turtle in March, a thumbnail-sized Pygmy Seahorse in August, and a shockingly colorful Nudibranch in December.

Each month features an informative eco-tip to help you save coral reefs no matter where you live. And we've included details about CORAL's conservation work at our seven project sites around the world—including photographs of the local community members and partners that your generous donations support.

We will automatically send you one calendar with your donation of \$35 or more. However, if you would like to receive additional calendars to give as gifts to your friends or family members, please donate an additional \$15 per calendar.

To ensure that you receive your calendar(s) in time for holiday giving, please send your donation on or before December 1. Please note that if you donate to receive five or more calendars, it may take up to two weeks for delivery.

In order to save paper and ensure that more of your donations go directly to protecting coral reefs, we have printed only a limited number of calendars this year. We will stop shipping calendars when supplies run out. Please send your contribution right away to reserve your calendar(s) and to help protect the planet's coral reefs.

To donate, log on to [www.coral.org/calendar](http://www.coral.org/calendar).