

# CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance

## CORAL Reef Leadership Network Trains Hundreds in Honduras

CORAL's Honduras-based Reef Leadership Network, in partnership with the Roatan Marine Park, has successfully trained more than 300 of Roatan's local tour operators, boat captains, water taxi drivers, and cruise ship tourism providers in coral reef ecology and sustainable marine recreation practices. This exciting milestone is part of CORAL's larger plan to help reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism on the coastal environment in Roatan through targeted educational outreach.

Roatan is the largest of the Bay Islands off the northern coast of Honduras, and has gained worldwide popularity among tourists seeking sun, sand, and spectacular diving. It is home to some of the most diverse marine life in Central America.

Over the past few years, the flourishing tourism sector has driven development and intense cruise ship traffic to the region. The number of cruise ships visiting the Gulf of Honduras has increased nearly fivefold since 2000, making it the fastest-growing destination in the Caribbean. This incredible growth has led to environmental challenges that threaten the health of the coral reef ecosystem—the very resource the tourism industry depends on.

Nic Bach, Executive Director of the Roatan Marine Park, agrees that one of the largest threats to the local reefs is, in fact, tourists. Each week he sees a huge influx of cruise ship tourists visiting the island from two recently-opened docks that can accommodate 17,000 people per day. He is seeing firsthand the tremendous pressure these crowds are placing on the island's infrastructure and the direct impact that careless tourism practices are having on the reefs.

To mitigate these impacts, CORAL's Reef Leadership Network is working closely with the Roatan Marine Park to actively engage and train local marine recreation providers who contract with cruise ships, as well as local NGOs and community members. The comprehensive trainings go beyond basic coral reef ecology and best practices for marine tourism to incorporate additional useful information about tour group dynamics and the island's history.

CORAL's Honduras Field Manager, Jenny Myton, is overseeing the program. She is delighted with the success of the trainings so far and is grateful to have such a talented group of Reef Leaders. The Leaders come from diverse professional backgrounds and include a historian, a coastal manager, and a professional tour guide.

"We've seen good results with the CORAL Reef Leadership Network



Working Together to Keep  
Coral Reefs Alive

The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) unites communities to save coral reefs. We help the people who live near reefs protect their fragile resources by providing the means to develop local projects that save coral reefs and benefit communities.

trainings," agrees Nic Bach. "Educating tourists and marine recreation providers is a constant work in progress, but we are now seeing the training information being disseminated down through the different levels of tourism providers and into the hands of those people who deal with cruise ship customers on a daily basis."

As Bach points out, there is certainly more work to do. Marine tourism providers continue to hire new guides to meet the increasing demand, and CORAL is working to provide additional trainings that will reach these new employees.

In addition to training tourism providers, CORAL is investigating ways to reach tourists directly. We are working with local businesses in the region that cater to tourists, such as restaurants and hotels, to post educational posters about coral reef protection and responsible tourism practices.



CORAL Reef Leaders Andrea River and Juan Valla at a training with the Roatan Island Tours company  
Photo by Jenny Myton

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"Working Together to Keep Coral Reefs Alive"

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

# BREAKING NEWS FROM CORAL'S PROJECT SITES



Caye Caulker, Belize  
Photo by Candace Leong

## MESOAMERICA

**MEXICO:** CORAL's Reef Leaders are spearheading a series of follow-up evaluations with marine tourism providers who are actively participating in our Environmental Walk-Through program. The evaluations are geared toward ensuring that environmental recommendations are being applied and sustainable business practices are put into action. We are also working closely with Grupo Intersectorial, a newly formed NGO that has shown tremendous leadership in Cozumel and is interested in taking more of a management role in coordinating and executing coral reef conservation projects in the area.

**BELIZE:** In an effort to educate local youth about coral reef conservation, CORAL helped coordinate Earth Hour activities with the San Pedro Junior College. We are working closely with EcoMar and the Lionfish Planning Committee to launch the National Lionfish Project to help manage the negative effects of invasive lionfish on the local coral reef ecosystem. The project includes coastal workshops on lionfish capture and handling techniques, a national response plan, and monthly fishing tournaments.

**HONDURAS:** CORAL is meeting with key officials in the Ministry of Tourism to lobby for the inclusion of the voluntary standards for marine recreation in the country's scuba diving regulations. CORAL and the Roatan Marine Park are collaborating with WWF on a conservation management plan for Cordelia Banks, with hopes to eventually incorporate the region as a marine protected area. Plans are underway to organize more Sustainable Marine Recreation workshops for local marine recreation providers in Roatan.

## INDO-PACIFIC

**FIJI:** In partnership with SeaWeb and other local NGOs, CORAL is in the process of launching a community-based Coral Reef Leadership Network in Fiji. Initial trainings took place in June with local village leaders in the Kubulau District. CORAL is also collaborating with the Partners in Community Development Fiji program to offer a fish warden refresher course for the Kubulau fish wardens and custodians of the Namena Marine Reserve.

**INDONESIA:** CORAL has begun marine conservation work in the community of Amed, which is located in eastern Bali. The area is seeing an increase in marine tourism, and would benefit from targeted coral reef management efforts. We are in the process of building alliances with key stakeholders in the region, conducting preliminary SMR trainings, and fleshing out our work plan for the area.

## U.S. STATES AND TERRITORIES

**HAWAII:** CORAL is working closely with the Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources to coordinate activities in support of the newly established Kaanapali Makai Watch program. Makai Watch gives local communities the opportunity to become directly involved in the protection of their nearshore marine resources through outreach and education, monitoring, and voluntary compliance with rules and regulations. Also in Kaanapali, new businesses have been enlisted to participate in our "Take a Bite out of Fish Feeding" campaign. CORAL is continuing to refine our new citizen science online data portal while planning outreach events to promote the community-based tool.



# Biodiversity Is Critical for Ecosystem Services

Coral reef scene, Indonesia  
Photo by Jeff Yonover

by Joanna Solins

We often emphasize the amazing amount of biodiversity that coral reefs harbor, and its importance for driving ecosystem services. These services, including fisheries, coastal protection, and tourism, support the needs of a billion people and are conservatively estimated to be worth about \$400 billion per year to the global economy. Coral reef ecosystem services, and those of all the planet's ecosystems, are threatened by the loss of biodiversity.

In 2002, world leaders agreed to achieve a significant reduction in the loss of global biodiversity by 2010. Unfortunately, the unequivocal conclusion of a recent United Nations report is that this target has not been met. Moreover, according to the report—the third edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (GBO-3)—the principal pressures directly driving biodiversity loss are either constant or increasing in intensity.

## HOW ARE CORAL REEFS FARING?

Given the essential role that coral species play in building reefs and supporting biodiversity, the extinction risk analysis in the GBO-3 is particularly disturbing. “Extinction risk” in this analysis is defined as the proportion of species in a group expected to survive the near future without additional conservation actions. The analysis found that coral species are moving more rapidly towards a greater risk of extinction than any other group of species studied (see figure at right).

This severe increase in extinction risk can be attributed in large part to the widespread bleaching of tropical reef systems in 1998, a year of exceptionally-high sea temperatures, but the impacts of that event are compounded by other problems like overfishing, pollution, sedimentation, dynamite fishing, and a looming threat from

ocean acidification. These combined threats make tropical coral reef ecosystems vulnerable to collapse.

Another concern is the fact that recovering coral reefs do not appear to regain their previous levels of biodiversity. The GBO-3 points to evidence that in places where local reef recovery has occurred, new reef structures are less complex than the ones they replaced, reducing their capacity to support diversity.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

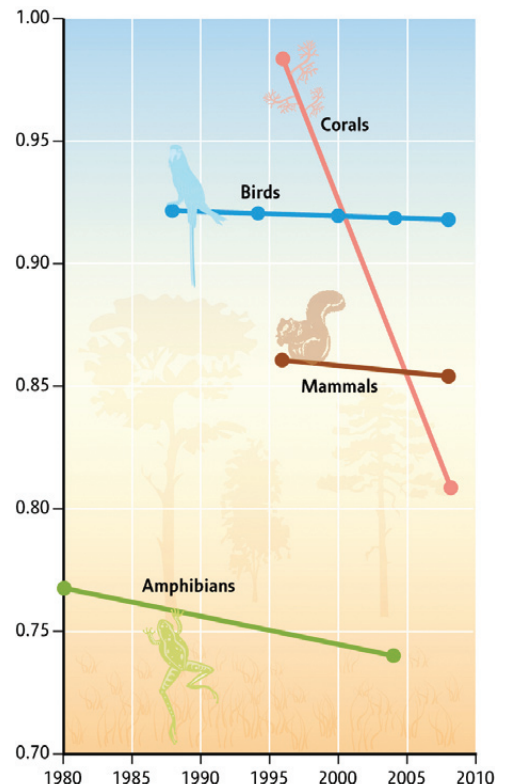
Although gloomy, the GBO-3's message is not one of doom. Global targets may have been missed, but important groundwork has been established toward preventing biodiversity loss. The world has seen a substantial increase in the number of protected areas, and some 170 countries now have national biodiversity strategies. Actions in support of the 2010 target have had locally significant results, suggesting that the tools exist for protecting biodiversity at wider scales.

Creating sound governmental policies to preserve biodiversity will be a critical component of biodiversity conservation, but the failure of national governments to achieve biodiversity targets underscores the importance of CORAL's work to unite local communities to save their own coral reefs. Indeed, the GBO-3 acknowledges the significance of local actions that often go unrecognized, and also emphasizes that even when government policy is involved, “strategies will only be effective if they genuinely involve the people closest to the resources they are designed to protect.”

For coral reefs in particular, the GBO-3 supports CORAL's approach of building

resiliency by addressing those threats that can be immediately alleviated. Furthermore, the report adds weight to CORAL's commitment to protecting established reef systems, as it is these reefs that support the highest levels of biodiversity.

The GBO-3 serves as an important wake-up call to our global society that we must address the issue of biodiversity loss immediately if we are to retain the ecosystem services that support us. CORAL's community-based, resilience-building strategies are an essential component of a global biodiversity conservation plan.



Red List Index for Extinction Risk  
A Red List Index value of 1.0 indicates that all species in a group are not expected to become extinct in the near future. At the other extreme, a value of 0 indicates that all species in a group have gone extinct.  
Graph courtesy of the Convention on Biological Diversity

# MARTI Committee Convenes at CORAL HQ



MARTI meeting participants at CORAL's San Francisco office

Photo by CORAL Staff

CORAL hosted the steering committee for the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI) at our San Francisco headquarters this April. For three days, representatives from over half a dozen international NGOs and tourism associations met with CORAL's Mexico and Honduras field managers and headquarters staff to collaborate and strategize on ways to further advance MARTI's goals.

The MARTI program, which was launched in 2004, is a multilateral initiative to address the threats posed by mass tourism to the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef by engaging leaders in the three main sectors of the tourism industry—hotels, tour operators, and cruise lines. MARTI has established an extensive network of partners, including private sector businesses, business associations and chambers of commerce, international and local NGOs, and local governments in Mexico, Belize, and Honduras.

The meeting focused on various ways to strengthen MARTI's objectives by establishing clear work plans, collaborative partnerships, and improved branding and fundraising strategies.

Manuel Paredes, Director General of the Riviera Maya Hotel Association (AHRM), was among the meeting participants and has been an instrumental figure in MARTI's success. He found the meeting to be a "great opportunity to share information and set common goals" among a group of qualified and committed executives working to protect the Mesoamerican Reef. He believes that MARTI's approach—working with hoteliers and marine recreation providers—is "essential to avoid negative impacts on the marine coastal ecosystem in the region."

Since the April meeting, MARTI has graduated several new hotels through the Environmental Walk-Through program, which imparts sustainable business practices to hotel operators and their partners. In addition, MARTI has been busy working with the Cozumel Reef National Marine Park to incorporate voluntary standards for marine recreation into the park's business management plan. MARTI plans to reconvene in Cancun this fall for its next bi-annual meeting.

## CORAL Project Site Spotlight: Belize



Ali Cansino (left), marine biologist for the Caye Caulker Marine Reserve, with CORAL's Programs Associate Candace Leong and Belize Field Manager Val Rosado

Photo courtesy of Candace Leong

Following her recent field visit to our Belize project sites, Conservation Programs Associate Candace Leong returned with a wealth of information to help further CORAL's collaborative partnerships in the region and ultimately strengthen our conservation program objectives.

Candace spent ten days on the ground in Belize working with Field Manager Valentine (Val) Rosado to hone our programmatic approach. Over the course of her visit, the two refined Val's compre-

hensive 2010-2015 work plan, which is aimed at expanding CORAL's conservation outcomes in San Pedro, Placencia, and neighboring buffer communities. From mangrove habitat awareness to lionfish eradication, the plan includes a host of innovative project ideas uniquely suited to address the local threats impacting the reef ecosystem.

During her visit, Candace and Val met with the management staff of local NGOs, marine protected areas (MPAs), and area dive shops to re-solidify our common goals and ensure that effective MPAs remain a top priority. They also connected with CORAL's Reef Leaders in San Pedro and Placencia and discussed ways in which CORAL can further support their educational outreach efforts.

Candace witnessed firsthand our conservation programs at work. She recorded CORAL-sponsored tools and products being used at area boat shops and tourism centers, including mooring buoy guides, promotional wrist bands, and mask straps. She dove in MPAs throughout our project sites and took

note of the abundance of sea life thriving within their boundaries, ranging from hawksbill sea turtles to fifteen-foot-long juvenile whale sharks.

Thanks to Candace and Val's hard work, we now have a clear plan for addressing the program needs in Belize well into the future.



A juvenile whale shark in the Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve  
Photo by Candace Leong

# CORAL Staff and Board Happenings

## HAWAII FIELD MANAGER JOINS DISTINGUISHED KA IPU KUKUI FELLOWS

We are proud to announce that Liz Foote, CORAL's Hawaii Field Manager, is now a 2009-2010 Ka Ipu Kukui Fellow. Liz recently completed the intensive, year-long Ka Ipu Kukui ("crucible of light") leadership program, which is designed to train community-identified future leaders in sustainably preserving the unique characteristics of "Maui Nui" (the islands of Maui County) into the future.



Hawaii Field Manager Liz Foote (back row, second from left) with her fellow 2009–2010 Ka Ipu Kukui Fellows  
Photo courtesy of Liz Foote

## PASSING THE TORCH IN SAN FRANCISCO

In June, Diana Williams stepped down as CORAL's Director of Development to devote more time to her family. During her tenure, Diana provided tremendous leadership in our development and communications initiatives. She will be deeply missed, and we wish her continued success in the future. In her absence, Sarah Freiermuth has made a seamless transition into the role of Interim Development Director and will continue to ensure the success of our fundraising and membership programs.

## CORAL ELECTS NEW BOARD CHAIR

CORAL would like to thank Lyn Ciocca McCaleb for her leadership and service as CORAL's board chair over the past three and a half years. Lyn took the board to a new level by guiding the process of board evaluations while restructuring and implementing a new governance system. We are grateful for her dedication and hard work, and for introducing us to Bill Jesse, our newly elected board chair. Bill has spent most of his life on, in, and around the ocean and, as a result, has a strong passion for marine conservation. He is currently Chairman and CEO of Jesse Capital Management, Inc., and specializes in marketing-driven businesses. He is a firm believer in CORAL's proven methodology and says he looks forward to "leveraging and expanding the lasting durability of our community-based solutions" to preserve healthy coral reefs.

## OUR CORAL COLONY GROWS IN FIJI

Congratulations to CORAL's Fiji Field Manager, Heidi Williams, and her husband Wayne on welcoming their second baby girl into the world on March 28th. We are happy to report that baby Nahla, older sister Kaya, and proud mom and dad are all doing well. CORAL would like to extend a special thanks to Wilderness Conservation Society staff scientist Akanisi Caginitoba (Cagi) for filling in for Heidi while she was on maternity leave.



Nahla experiences her first dip in the sea  
Photo courtesy of Heidi Williams

## New CORAL Videos



On World Ocean Day last month, CORAL released two short, inspirational videos featuring the legendary Dr. Sylvia Earle. The videos capture the story of CORAL's mission and show the positive impact our work is having on coral reefs and coral reef communities around the world.

If you haven't checked them out already, please visit [www.coral.org/CORAL\\_videos](http://www.coral.org/CORAL_videos). We encourage you to share the links with your friends and help spread the word about coral reef conservation.

## CORAL Partners with Smithsonian

The Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef, an artistic tribute to the wonders of the marine world, will be on exhibit in the newly-built Sant Ocean Hall at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. from October 16, 2010 to April 17, 2011. CORAL is delighted to be a sponsor of this new exhibit. Stay tuned for more details about CORAL's involvement in this upcoming project.



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The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance



Photos by previous contest winners Alessandro Dona, Jeremy Ellis, Lucy Wu, and Matt Grace. Design by Greg Moretti.

## Enter CORAL's Photo and Logo Design Contests

### E-CURRENT PHOTO CONTEST

Submit your favorite coral reef photographs for a chance to win a copy of *Reef*—a gorgeous coffee table book featuring beautiful coral reef photographs. Each winning photograph will be featured in a special bi-monthly edition of *E-Current*, CORAL's free electronic newsletter, and will be available for download as desktop wallpaper from our website. Visit [www.coral.org/resources/photo\\_contest](http://www.coral.org/resources/photo_contest) for rules and details.

### WEST HAWAII VOLUNTARY STANDARDS LOGO DESIGN CONTEST

If you have a creative eye for design, we need your help! CORAL is holding a design contest to create a logo for the consensus-based West Hawaii Voluntary Standards for Marine Tourism. Over twenty West Hawaii-based companies have signed on to adopt the marine tourism standards for scuba diving, wildlife interactions, general boating, and shoreline activities, and we're looking for a logo design that will help expand awareness about the standards. Enter our contest, and you could win a Flip Video™ camera! The contest closes on July 31, 2010, so submit your designs today. To learn more, visit [www.coral.org/west\\_hawaii\\_logo\\_contest](http://www.coral.org/west_hawaii_logo_contest).