

CORAL CURRENT

CORAL REEF ALLIANCE MAGAZINE | WINTER 2016



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Cover photo by Jeff Yonover

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Coral Reef Alliance saved the following resources by using 340 pounds of Oceanation Silk, made with 100% recycled fiber and 100% post-consumer waste, versus 340 pounds of virgin fiber from an Ancient Forest Friendly™ and manufactured with electricity that is offset with GreenPower™ and renewable energy certificates.				
trees	CO ₂ emissions	solid waste	greenhouse gases	
3 fully grown	589 gallons	1 million BTUs	10 pounds	293 pounds
Calculations based on research by Environmental Defense Fund and other members of the Paper Task Force. www.newleafpaper.com				

A Letter from our Executive Director



One of the great benefits of my job is that I see and hear about all the incredible work being done by coral reef champions around the world. These champions are driven by a deep passion and don't sit back and watch coral reefs decline. Instead, they take

action to ensure that the future of their communities and reefs are bright.

In this edition of CORAL Current, we recognize three inspiring leaders who embody an important truth: people can save coral reefs. These coral reef champions are making a difference through local conservation efforts. When you read about Didi, Chrissie and John, you will see that their actions, whether big or small, are a step in the right direction. They show us that we can empower people and communities to raise awareness for coral reefs and to inform better decisions about how to protect them.

Champions like Didi, Chrissie and John are finding successes through local action. But people don't have to live near the reef to be a champion. For example, world leaders are seeking ways to reverse one of the biggest threats to reefs: human-caused climate change. You can help reefs too, by reducing your carbon footprint, supporting the many organizations that are dedicated to protecting reefs, or limiting your use of sunscreens when diving or snorkeling.

The power of one is the catalyst behind the power of many.

By working together, locally and globally, we can save coral reefs.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Webster



Calendar Correction: We found an error in this year's CORAL Calendar and unintentionally placed Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in October versus September. We extend our sincere apologies for this oversight.

SPOTLIGHT: BUMPHHEAD PARROT FISH



Photo by Stuart Hamilton



Photo by Dr. Michael Webster

Contributed by Dr. Michael Webster

The first time I encountered bumphead parrotfish, I was diving on Australia's Great Barrier Reef in shallow water near the end of a dive. As I was watching schools of small fish dart in and out of the coral, I heard an unusual sound. It was as though ten people were scraping the ice off their frozen windshields all at the same time. I could hear it, but couldn't identify where it was coming from. The source of the sound soon materialized as twenty giant bumphead parrotfish emerged out of the edge of visibility, pausing to take bites out of the reef along the way. You have to hear and see it to believe it.

Bumpheads use their hard, parrot-like beak to scrape food off of the seafloor. They have a taste for live coral versus the algae that's more typical of this parrotfish species. This live coral consumption may even help corals. Those small bites leave divot scars, which create a perfect place for baby corals to settle down and build a new colony.



Photo by Dr. Michael Webster



Photo by Klaus Stiefel



Photo by Dr. Michael Webster

Enormous and Long-Lived

Bumphead Parrotfish (*Bolbometopon muricatum*) can weigh more than 100 pounds (46 kilograms) and can live for 40 years.

Sequential Hermaphrodites

Bumpheads start life as females and as they get older, the largest ones change into males. The life history strategies where individuals change sex over their lifetime are called sequential hermaphroditism and is surprisingly common on coral reefs.

Diversity Maintenance

As a keystone predator, bumpheads help maintain diversity on coral reefs by grazing on corals, algae, sponges and other invertebrates.

Conspicuous Targets

This species is large and easy to spot, so there is a danger in overharvesting of bumpheads by fishers, and they are now rare in some regions.

Ancient Relatives

Parrotfishes originated during the Miocene-Oligocene, 14 to 35 million years ago. Bumpheads are the largest species in their family.



Photo by NOAA

CORAL REEF CHAMPIONS

By Sarah Eminheizer

Sirilo “Didi” Dulunaqio

Sirilo “Didi” Dulunaqio grew up by the turquoise colored ocean near the district of Kubulau in Fiji. He has always loved the sea, but it was while working as a divemaster that he fell in love with what he describes as “the blessings and treasures” that live below the waterline—coral reefs.



Didi has dedicated his life to protecting Fiji’s underwater treasures, and in 2006, he joined the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) family. From the beginning, we knew he would leave an incredible mark on all of us.

The first time I met Didi, I noticed his smile; it is contagious. And, when he speaks about his work to save coral reefs, his grin beams and you can see the passion in his eyes.

Didi believes that each of us has a tremendous obligation to protect coral reefs. He turned his beliefs into actions and is now an influential voice in Fijian communities, inspiring others to preserve their reefs.

Over the years, he saw a decline in fish populations and his concerns about the health of the reef grew. Overfishing was becoming more prevalent, but the communities dependency on the reef to feed their families could not be ignored.

In Fiji, a unique mix of government and traditional ownership is responsible for management of fishing grounds. Knowing this, Didi approached the elders in his community and pleaded that they create tabu (no

take) areas to safeguard their reefs. This plea was the first step toward the creation of the Namena Marine Reserve and the Kubulau Resource Management Committee.

“I dove the reefs before the Namena Marine Reserve was in place. I saw the beautiful corals and the abundant schools of fish. I swam alongside the sharks and it was during this time that I knew I needed to protect this place.”

By Didi Dulunaqio

For more than a decade, Didi worked tirelessly to establish protection for Kubulau’s reefs. He collaborated with members of the community and local leaders to create tabu areas. As a valued member of CORAL, he helped develop a voluntary dive fee system to finance community development projects and support marine management. It is thanks to Didi’s efforts that more than 70 square kilometers of coral reefs are protected in the Namena Marine Reserve, one of the largest tabu areas in Fiji.

For Didi, coral reef conservation comes from the heart, but not just his own. At his home, protecting reefs is a family affair. Didi’s wife, Salome, and his four children often lend a hand when he’s gone, to support his efforts.

Didi is a coral reef champion. It is no exaggeration to say that the Namena Marine Reserve would not have happened without his passionate drive. Everyone at CORAL is grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside Didi and his family. He has taught us all about the true power of community-based conservation work, and he will continue to inspire us in his ongoing work with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

By James Lloyd

Chrissie Bowen



Take only pictures, leave only bubbles; these words are the conservation philosophy of Dive Pangea shop co-owner Chrissie Bowen. Growing up in landlocked Texas and during visits with her grandparents, Chrissie discovered her love of the ocean while watching Jacques Cousteau. At the age of 21, Chrissie’s grandfather noted her love for the ocean and offered to pay for her dive training and scuba gear.

Chrissie’s first ocean dive in Cancun gave her an up close experience with coral reefs, teeming with shiny schools of fish and colorful marine wildlife. It sparked a lifelong dream and her days of watching Jacques Cousteau were over. Now, she planned to explore coral reefs around the world and own a dive shop.

Over the years she continued to plan out her dream, and finally, in 2015, Chrissie and her husband decided to make that dream a reality. They moved to Honduras and opened Dive Pangea on the idyllic white sand beaches of Camp Bay. Today, Chrissie is a certified PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer and teaches her students about the beauty, fragility and care needed to protect coral reefs.

Recently, Chrissie assisted scientists with the data collection efforts as part of the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGGRA) surveys. These surveys help to determine the health of the reef and Chrissie provided dive boats and equipment, and participated as a citizen scientist collecting data.

During the survey Chrissie met Jenny Myton, CORAL’s associate program director in Honduras. Throughout the week, they discussed her interest in aiding with conservation efforts along the Mesoamerican Reef. Chrissie was so inspired by her experience that she now seeks to become a reef surveyor. She also began to raise money to help protect the reefs. In fact, during a recent visit home, she raised more than \$1,000, with the help of her former employer Patti Stewart at the International Scuba in Dallas, to pay for the installation of six mooring lines and two sets of channel markers.

“I see, firsthand, how local threats impact coral reefs. One of the biggest challenges to the reefs at Camp Bay is poaching and overfishing and I’m trying to raise awareness and help expand patrols. I saw my first turtle this year since coming to the East End and I want to see more, I want to help restore the marine wildlife.”



Chrissie is a coral champion determined to make a difference. She inspires all those she meets to care for and protect these beautiful underwater havens. We foresee great successes, and we imagine that she’ll work to leave future generations with a wonderful world full of breathtaking coral reefs and only, a trail of bubbles.

As they say in Fiji, a omu vei qaravi e sa na cori me oi’ou i salulsalu.— Your contributions will be strung as our beautiful scented garland.

From all of us at CORAL, Vinaka



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“*I am only fronting these conservation efforts. Our success would not be possible without the dedication of the many people that rallied behind me to advance all of these efforts. Like a canoe, I may be setting the sails and direction on this conservation voyage, but there’s multiple skills and energy behind paddling and steering to get to where we are today.*”

John B Rulmal Jr

CORAL Conservation Prize Winner



In September, we were honored to award our annual \$20,000, CORAL Conservation Prize to John B. Rulmal Jr. John is passionate, driven and dedicated. He is one of the inspirational visionaries making remarkable advancements in reef conservation and management in the small community of Falalop, on the Ulithi Atoll.

In 2008, John returned to his native land to carry on his father’s legacy of coral reef conservation. He wasted no time, and his focus was on helping his people bridge the environmental, social and economic challenges of this century.

His accomplishments are many—he has helped develop Locally Managed Marine Areas on the atoll’s four islands, revived traditional management plans that allow for sustainable fishing, and established communication tools that share data and conservation plans with regional and national government entities. He also creates educational programs that inspire both present and future generations to be more involved in coral reef conservation. John’s commitment has inspired the Ulithi communities and his successes are their success.