



Reef Check Australia News Update May 2007

Reef Check Australia involves the community in collecting data on the health of the Reef.

“Long-term monitoring goes a long way to helping us understand and observe the marine ecosystem... Involving the community in reef monitoring is important, especially given the increasing pressures on the reef from coral bleaching and declining water quality... I applaud Reef Check for helping monitor and protect this natural asset,” Senator Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Nov 2006.

Staff changes and opportunities

We welcome Malo Hosken who has volunteered to help develop a Reef Check school resource pack with Townsville City Council. David Roadknight, who has been an intern with us since January, will complete his dive instructor course in August so that he can teach the next round of Reef Check courses in September and October.

We are urgently looking for a part-time (~20 hours per week) Administration Assistant to provide administrative support to our growing team in Townsville. We are also looking for a part-time (~1 day per week) fisheries biologist to manage the new recreational fishing line clean up and coral trout monitoring project over the next couple of years. Please contact support@reefcheckaustralia.org with your resume if you are interested in either position.

The Great Barrier Reef Project

The 2007 survey season got off to a slow start due to bad weather conditions. Volunteers have now completed 21 surveys and have selected and mapped new sites from Cairns with New Horizon. We intend to select sites, map and survey at Kelso reef, now visited by [Sunsea Cruises](#) from Townsville, and the first trip to the Whitsunday region will take place 9 - 11 June.

The Great Barrier Reef Project is supported by the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF), administered by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC).



From left: Andrew Harvey, Anne-Laure Clement, Paul Radford, Laura Fantozzi, Peter Faulkner, Jos Hill, Brian Pryde, Ruth Faulkner, Chris Jones and Roger Beeden

Reef Check Townsville

Fishing line clean up on Orpheus and Pelorus Islands

To mark Dive into Earth Day on 22 April, Reef Check Australia coordinated a visit to James Cook University's Orpheus Island Research Station (JCU-OIRS) to carry out a fishing line clean up and test the first stage of a new monitoring protocol that has the support of Project AWARE, JCU-OIRS and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).



From left: Lauren Bird, Ally Beeden, Ruth Faulkner, Steve Glasby, Jos Hill, Ron Schroeder, Anne-Laure Clement, Zoe Andrews and Roger Beeden

The first task on the four day visit was to remove fishing line and other debris from the reef at a site at Orpheus Island and neighbouring Pelorus Island. The volunteer team discovered a lot of fishing line at both sites and had to make two dives in order to collect it all, highlighting the impact that fishing can have on the reef.

The 'clean' sites were then surveyed for the abundance and size of coral trout, popular catches with fishermen to the region but also an ecologically important species on the reef. The volunteer team found significantly more coral trout in the green zone than blue, and that the coral trout in the green zone were also generally of a larger size. A protocol for snorkellers is under development alongside the one for volunteer divers, which will allow the local recreational fishing community to get involved in monitoring the zones.

This work fits in with current research being conducted by GBRMPA and JCU into the effectiveness of green zones as an environmental management tool. It is hypothesised that green zones will help to restock blue zones through adult fish spill over and larval recruitment. JCU researchers are excited about having their data corroborated by local volunteers who will be able to expand upon the sites mentioned and continue monitoring into the long term.

The success of this Dive Into Earth Day collaboration between Reef Check Australia, GBRMPA, JCU-OIRS and Project AWARE has resulted in future plans to coordinate annual surveys of these baseline sites to monitor the reoccurrence of fishing debris and presence of coral trout and expand the program to compare other sites that are not currently monitored by researchers.

We have recently received funds from the George Alexander Foundation and the Landcare Australia Post Grants to expand this project to additional sites in the Palm Islands.

We are looking for a part-time (~1 day per week) fisheries biologist to manage this project over the next couple of years. Please contact support@reefcheckaustralia.org with your resume if you are interested.

Reef Check Gold Coast

The Reef Check Gold Coast team is initiating a training course 1st July 2007. The financial support from SEQ catchments NRM body has enabled the Gold Coast team to survey reefs in the Gold Coast and Moreton Bay areas of south east Queensland. Members of Sea World, Telstra and the Underwater Research Dive Club in Brisbane are set to be trained in our first course this year. Sea World has also provided immense support to the initiation of a locally trained team and will be providing boat access to Palm Beach reef. Big Cat ocean cruises will provide access for the team to Flinders Reefs in Moreton Bay. Reef Check has established a firm grounding in the Moreton Bay and Gold Coast areas and has been invited by the Gold Coast City Council and SEQ catchments to provide several and ongoing public presentations on the local reef life.

For further information regarding this project please contact:

Jonathan Werry

Gold Coast Coordinator

goldcoast@reefcheckaustralia.org

Reef Check Sunshine Coast

Reef Check Australia has extended into the Sunshine Coast/Burnett Region. This program will endeavour to raise local, national and international awareness, of the ecological and economic importance of Southern Queensland's coral reefs.

Unlike the GBR, little is known about the extent of the coral reefs or marine biodiversity in this region, even by authorities, which has increased the necessity for Reef monitoring here. Reef monitoring was first discussed with environmental managers (EPA/QPWS, NRM and GBRMPA) and local ecologists more than 2 years ago. The Reef Check data will contribute to state government and local area management plans and the UN's Bio-sphere application for the Noosa area, not to mention the global coral reef crisis data base.

Organisation support to date:

State Gov. - EPA/QPWS, NRW.

Local Gov. - Noosa Council, Caloundra City Council

NGO - Sunshine Coast Dive Club (SCDC) Noosa Integrated Catchment Assoc., Noosa Parks Assoc. Sunshine Coast Environment Council, Coolum Coast Care.

Businesses - Noosa Blue Water Dive, Davo's Bait n Tackle.

Universities - University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), James Cook University, Townsville (JCU).



On the 23rd and 24th of June the first group of potential trainee's are going to meet and coordinate training times for RC certification. This will be done in conjunction with the SC dive Club in the form of a dive trip to King Island.

For further information regarding this project contact:

Kris Boody

Sunshine Coast/Burnett Region Coordinator

sunshinecoast@reefcheckaustralia.org

Surveyors needed in the Whitsunday Region!

Reef Check are now looking for expressions of interest from committed volunteers who live in Mackay or Airlie Beach with the aim of setting up a volunteer team who can monitor the local reefs in the Whitsunday region on a long-term basis.

Precision Study

With the help of many of our volunteer surveyors, we have been working hard to calibrate the Reef Check survey methodology over the past few months. The results of this precision study will add considerable support to Reef Check Australia's existing monitoring data.

The aim of this project has been to address some of the perceived limitations of Reef Check monitoring. One aspect has been to examine the effects of transect drift and repeat sampling on our monitoring data. The preliminary results are encouraging, and the robust design of the Reef Check survey reduces variability to a

low level, enabling us to place confidence limits on estimates of hard coral cover of only plus or minus a few percent.

This work will be continuing over the coming weeks, with the emphasis on looking at how small differences in transect location each year may impact on our picture of long-term reef condition.

This study has been undertaken by Laura Fantozzi as part of her Masters project at JCU in collaboration with Andrew Harvey from the UK.

EcoAction Update



Sales of the [EcoAction products](#) to tour operators are going well and we now outlets throughout the GBR. The first print run of the Indo-Pacific Underwater Reef Guide has sold out and the second batch is on order. The *Underwater Reef Guide* can be purchased online from [Underwater Australasia](#) who have kindly offered to handle distribution for us.

RCA is developing an educational program in a partnership with Townsville City Council and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. In its first stage, this project aims at providing curricular activities for primary and high school students in the Townsville area. Three sets of activities, tailored for three age groups, will be based around existing RCA educational materials such as the *Reef Check Adventures* book and the *Underwater Reef Guide*. The focus of the activities will be to increase interest in the biological processes in coral reefs as well as increasing awareness about coral reef conservation issues, including monitoring methods that enable to track the status of coral reefs. Equally important is to increase the children's understanding of general environmental sustainability and to develop an understanding of how humans are part of their environment, how they affect it and actions that they can take to remedy such impacts. Contact Malo Hosken for further information and feedback at education@reefcheckaustralia.org.

Our [website](#) is currently undergoing some changes to incorporate more information on the EcoAction program, making it easier for people to find out how they can get involved. We will also have the facility for visitors to the website to register as members of Reef Check Australia, download screensavers, purchase EcoAction products and RCA merchandise to help support our ongoing monitoring programs.

Sign The International Declaration of Reef Rights

In honour of the International Year of the Reef in 2008, Reef Check is requesting you sign our Declaration of Reef Rights. Reef Check International would like to present the Declaration along with a list of one million names to all coral reef country governments in January 2009. The purpose of this pledge is to highlight the high value of coral reefs and to encourage all people and governments to support coral reef conservation.

So far 3433 people have signed up to the Declaration but only 80 of these signatures come from Australia, that's just 2.3%! Click on the image on the right to link to the website and make your pledge.



The Reef Needs YOU... Tube!

Reef Check Australia has just placed a video about the organisation and our work on You Tube. The video was put together by Roger Beeden and Corey Worcester. Footage was donated by Digital Dimensions and the 'Ocean' soundtrack by the John Butler Trio. You can watch the video by clicking the small play button on the video window at the bottom of our homepage. Please take the time to [watch the video](#) and forward the link to your friends to watch too http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inGov_ipVkk.

Beeramundi's Back!



The partnership between Reef Check Australia and The Brewery is back this year after Beeramundi became The Brewery's quickest selling feature beer when it was launched in April last year - the 1,700 litre batch sold out in just 1 month!

Many of you attended the inaugural quiz night, held to re-launch the beer on 29 May. The evening was a great success, with Quiz Master, David Wachenfeld from GBRMPA, awarding the winning team "Ar'team'ia" with a double pass to visit Kelso Reef courtesy of [Sunferries](#), while "Sweetlips and the sexy checkers" won best team name and a voucher redeemable against food and drink at The Brewery. Collectively we drank our way through 50 litres of Beeramundi!

Reef Check benefit from every Beeramundi sold, so if you haven't done so already, head down to The Brewery to get some before this year's batch runs out!

Beeramundi branded clothing and merchandise is available at www.cafepress.com/reefcheck.

Photography Competition

In order to raise awareness for Reef Check Australia we will be holding an underwater photography competition later this year. An exhibition of the short listed works will be held in Purse Tucker Gallery between 7 September and 7 October. Please check the website over the next month for further information.

Training

Townsville:

Substrate identification and invertebrate and impact assessment. September part time (\$495 or \$395 students).

Video transects - August. Dates TBA. \$120

Cairns:

Substrate identification and invertebrate and impact assessment. October part time (\$495 or \$395 students).

Noosa:

Coming soon. Contact sunshinecoast@reefcheckaustralia.org

Gold Coast:

Substrate identification, invertebrate and impact assessment, fish and video transects. July part time. (10% off course price for participation in all course modules \$774 or students \$684)

Download the training course details from www.reefcheckaustralia.org/training or register your interest by emailing support@reefcheckaustralia.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

If you want to get involved with our surveys please contact support@reefcheckaustralia.org or go to www.reefcheckaustralia.org/training for a training program outline.

We have full-time volunteer placements each year for budding marine biologists who want to get work experience with us. We are also looking for office support in the following areas:

Grant writer: as much time as you can spare 😊

Corporate fundraising

Sponsorship Opportunities

As an environmental charity we are a tax deductible gift recipient. For all of the following opportunities we offer brand exposure for our sponsors through our community events/presentations, products and on our website. We are looking for investment in the following projects:

EcoAction Program: We have been collaborating with Reef Check Headquarters in the development of some new ecotourism products which we will sell via our tourism partners to increase tourist understanding of coral reefs as well as to generate revenue to support our projects. We need some initial investment to print these products in order to start distribution.

Reef Check Adventures Kids Book: \$15,000

Underwater Guide: \$15,000

Reef Check Townsville: Unfortunately Envirofund did not support our Palm Islands survey expeditions this time around. We are looking for \$15,000 for each 6 day trip to survey 5 sites around the Palm Island Group. We ultimately aim to conduct these surveys twice per year.

Contacts database: We are looking for \$10,000 to assist us to finish our much-needed contacts database, which will enable us to kick-off our international membership program.

Public Education: We are looking for an investment of \$15,000 per location to help run a local educational event in Townsville, Cairns/Port Douglas, Airlie Beach, Mackay, Rockhampton, Noosa, Gold Coast and Perth.

Reef Check Australia Website: We are seeking a \$15,000 annual investment to assist us in keeping our website up to date with informative information on our projects and coral reefs for our members.

Training Courses: We are seeking funds to run training courses at additional locations. Apart from our training fee, we are looking for \$6000 per course of 8 students to assist with coordination, training facilities and trips to the reef. These amounts can include in-kind reef access and use of facilities.

Reef Check Coordinators: We aim to establish Reef Check Coordinators in a number of locations through Australia to train new volunteers, coordinate surveys, and seek new funding and partnership opportunities. We are currently seeking funds to support coordinators in Noosa, Gold Coast, Cairns, Mackay and Perth, WA.

Administration and IT Support: We are looking for \$15,000 per annum to support an administration assistant for our head office as well as to assist with our IT.

Thank you to all Reef Check Australia supporters