

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

REEF conserves marine ecosystems for their recreational, commercial, and intrinsic value by educating, enlisting, and enabling divers and other marine enthusiasts to become active stewards and citizen scientists. REEF links the diving community with scientists, resource managers, and conservationists through marine life data collection and related activities.



REEF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

PROTECTING MARINE LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION, SERVICE & RESEARCH



A NOTE FROM PAUL HUMANN

More than 50 years ago, I started photographing and cataloging marine species. As I began exploring the mysterious underwater world, I became increasingly determined to identify the sea creatures I encountered. Through long hours of documentation, classifying, and corresponding with taxonomic scientists, I realized that recognizing marine species would enable any diver to assess reef fish populations.

In discussing this thought with Ned DeLoach, we came up with the idea of founding the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF).

We could not have predicted the amazing success this idea would have! Over 15,000 volunteer divers and snorkelers have now created the largest fish sightings database in the world. These data, and other REEF projects, have had an enormous positive impact on fish populations.

For REEF, 2015 was filled with adventures, exciting discoveries, and ongoing support of ocean heroes around the world! Highlights of this report include:

- Submission of the 200,000th survey for the Volunteer Fish Survey Project
- Addition of our 60,000th member
- Pioneering invasive lionfish research, effective removal events, and the introduction of lionfish to restaurants and dinner tables

- Acoustic tagging of Nassau Grouper and studies on their egg fertilization rates
- Expansion of our Explorers Program, which provides education to a diverse audience of marine enthusiasts, from Marine Conservation Interns to young kids
- Innovative outreach efforts, including Fishinars that allow members to learn about a range of ocean ecosystem topics from the comfort of their own home

Looking forward, REEF is expecting to ...

- Improve Headquarters in Key Largo, Florida, to increase visibility and access by updating exhibits and eventually expanding the facility for visitors
- Increase REEF's membership through diverse, enhanced educational programs that are broadly appealing and accessible
- Update the REEF website with more visuals and engaging content

After more than a quarter of a century, REEF has shown the impact that grassroots, passionate work can have on marine conservation efforts. It is only through the dedication and support of our members that we are successful in our ability to use citizen science to make a difference. I hope you enjoy our review of 2015 and can't wait to share our future adventures with you!

Best "Fishes"
Paul Humann

Paul Humann,
REEF Co-Founder and President



ABOUT REEF

REEF was founded in 1990, and in 1993, launched the Volunteer Fish Survey Project. This citizen science fish monitoring program has become the world's largest such effort. Since then, REEF has expanded its core programs to include:

- Volunteer Fish Survey Project in eight regions worldwide
- Grouper Moon Project
- Invasive Lionfish Program
- Education and Outreach Programs
- Field Survey Trips



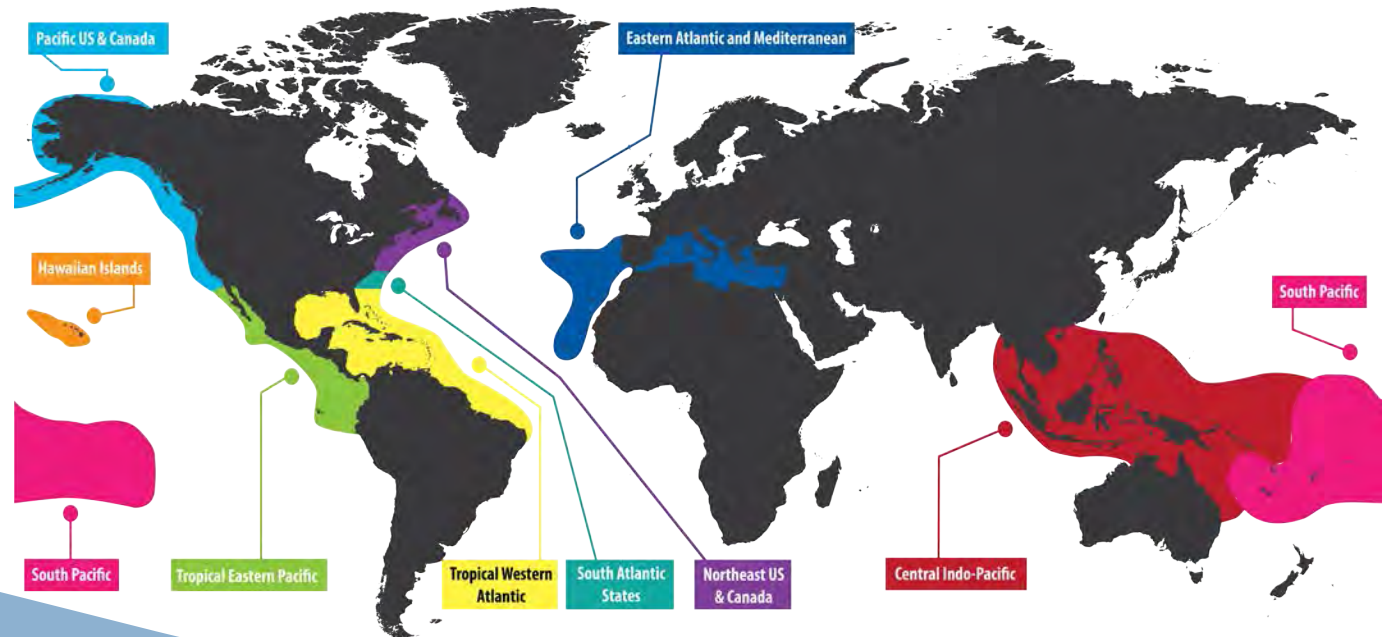


Started in 1993, the Volunteer Fish Survey Project engages SCUBA divers and snorkelers to collect and report information on marine fish populations as well as sea turtles and select invertebrate and algae species. It has grown to become one of the most effective and powerful ocean citizen science programs, and it has generated the **world's largest database on marine fishes**. These data are being used to better understand and protect ocean ecosystems worldwide.

REEF survey volunteers who conduct a minimum number of surveys and pass an identification exam achieve Expert REEF Surveyor status. In 2015, REEF welcomed **28 new members** to the Advanced Assessment Team (AAT), bringing the total number of surveyors in this expert group to 413.

Members of the AAT assisted REEF with several projects, including: an assessment of the Florida Keys artificial reef, *USS Vandenberg*, and nearby coral reefs; and monitoring fish and invertebrate populations in two areas in Washington State, the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and the San Juan Islands.

► www.REEF.org/programs/volunteersurvey



VOLUNTEER FISH SURVEY PROJECT

Other highlights of our work in 2015 include:

- REEF continued working with our **partners in the Azores** to expand the Survey Project to the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.
- The Survey Project database topped **200,000 surveys**.
- Two papers were published in scientific journals that included REEF data:

Serafy JE, GS Shideler, RJ Araújo, and I Nagelkerken. 2015. **Mangroves Enhance Reef Fish Abundance at the Caribbean Regional Scale.** *PLoS ONE*. 10(11): e0142022

Shideler, GS, DW Carter, C Liese, JE Serafy. 2015. **Lifting the goliath grouper harvest ban: Angler perspectives and willingness to pay.** *Fisheries Research*. Volume 16: 156-165

▶ www.REEF.org/db/publications



VOLUNTEER FISH SURVEY PROJECT



REEF DATABASE NUMBERS

In 2015, **11,222 REEF surveys** were conducted. Over half of those (6,711) were conducted at sites in the Tropical Western Atlantic. To date*, **204,452 REEF surveys** have been conducted at **12,337 sites**. **15,289 volunteers** have participated. *Survey numbers as of May 27, 2016.



200,000th REEF SURVEY

In 2015, the **200,000th survey** was submitted to the Volunteer Fish Survey Project database. The lucky 200k survey was conducted by long-time Expert REEF surveyor, Kreg Martin. It was a Central Indo-Pacific (CIP) survey conducted on October 15, 2015, at Cape Kri in Dampier Strait, Raja Ampat, Indonesia. He reported **208 species in 68 minutes!**



GREAT ANNUAL FISH COUNT

▶ www.fishcount.org

REEF coordinates this annual event each July to mobilize and train volunteers to document fish diversity and population trends. Dozens of GAFC events were held across all REEF regions, including free identification seminars and organized survey dives.



REEF's Invasive Lionfish Program aims to develop and implement research initiatives, response strategies, outreach, awareness events, and control programs. Invasive lionfish, though beautiful in their native Indo-Pacific, are severely impacting western Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystems. REEF's activities in 2015 to help protect native marine life from the invasion include efforts on both regional and local scales including:

RESEARCH

- Conducting research on lionfish removals, derby effectiveness, movement, deep-water populations, lionfish attracting devices, and impacts, as well as facilitating the research of others through training and consultation
- Assessing lionfish impacts through more than **400 lionfish research surveys**, counting more than **223 lionfish and 53,000 prey fish**
- Authoring or co-authoring scientific papers on lionfish that were **cited more than 200 times** in 2015
- Co-authoring a paper describing the potential expansion of a new non-native damselfish in the Gulf of Mexico

CONTROL

- **Removing 1,141 lionfish** through REEF Lionfish Derbies in the Florida Keys, Bahamas, and Southeast Florida
- Expanding our REEF Sanctioned Lionfish Derby Program – **14 REEF Sanctioned Derbies held in 3 different countries**, with 257 total participants removing 5,979 lionfish

MARKETS

- Publishing a new, second edition of *The Lionfish Cookbook* that includes guest chef recipes
- Organizing and conducting lionfish food and wine nights at key restaurants

OUTREACH AND MANAGEMENT

- Co-organizing and hosting the eighth annual lionfish session at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute conference in Panama
- Conducting **20 lionfish collecting, handling, and permitting workshops** for more than 300 people around the region
- Serving as an author of the US National Invasive Lionfish Prevention and Management Plan
- Featuring the lionfish issue in major media outlets

Since 2006, REEF has focused on lionfish control and researching new ways to address the invasion. Our partnerships with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Geological Survey, the International Coral Reef Initiative, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Dive Equipment and Marketing Association, universities, dive clubs, and other local groups have provided significant resources towards furthering our understanding of the invasion and how best to minimize lionfish impacts.

▶ www.REEF.org/lionfish



The Grouper Moon Project, a collaboration between REEF and the Cayman Islands Department of the Environment (CIDOE), aims to study and conserve the endangered Nassau Grouper. Historically, Nassau Grouper represented one of the Caribbean's most economically important fisheries. Due to intense harvest on spawning aggregations, populations have dwindled.



RESEARCH

Scientists and volunteers from REEF, CIDOE, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, conducted the annual Grouper Moon Project in February 2015, studying the Little Cayman Nassau Grouper spawning aggregation. Early in the 12-day spawning cycle, researchers discovered that the Nassau Grouper were not in their historical location. After searching adjacent areas with underwater scooters, the aggregation was ultimately found about 500 meters to the north.

The research dive team conducted routine visual census monitoring protocols to document population estimates and sizes of spawning individuals. On nights of spawning, the team collected samples from the spawning bursts. The eggs were taken back to a lab facility and maintained in aquaria until they hatched as larvae. Based on this work, **we will calculate egg fertilization rates**, which help provide managers realistic rates of recovery.

In 2015, we also started work to repeat an acoustic tracking study that was originally conducted in 2006-2008. **Our team acoustically-tagged 20 Nassau Grouper and 15 Tiger Grouper**, another species that spawns at the Little Cayman site. These data will identify movement patterns and home reef locations.

GROUPEL EDUCATION PROGRAM

We continued to grow the Grouper Education Program (GEP) in 2015, with continued support from the Disney Conservation Fund. The GEP is a marine sciences curriculum for elementary and high school students aimed to engage Caymanian students in the Grouper Moon Project.

The highlight of the GEP curriculum is a series of live-feed, video sessions that REEF facilitates between school classrooms and researchers in the field (often while the researchers are underwater). **Three live-chats** were held during the January 2015 field season. All sessions are archived on REEF's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/REEFGrouperMoonProjectEducation>). **Over 300 students from 15 classrooms at 10 schools** participated in the webchats.



As part of the GEP, we also held our first "Family & School Community Event" on Cayman Brac. We shared research findings and information about the education program with local families and educators.

► www.REEF.org/groupermoonproject





DIVE VACATIONS THAT COUNT!

REEF Field Survey Trips allow surveyors to expand their fish identification knowledge and interact with other marine life enthusiasts while enjoying daily seminars and a full dive schedule. In addition to fish and invertebrate identification trips, REEF also arranges Invasive Lionfish Research Trips.

During the 2015 Field Survey Trip season, **219 participants conducted more than 2,200 surveys**, proving that REEF Trips truly are "Dive Vacations That Count."

► www.REEF.org/trips



2015 REEF TRIP DESTINATIONS:

Hawaii, *Kona Aggressor II* Liveaboard

Grand Cayman, Wall to Wall Diving and Comfort Suites

Fiji, *NAI'A* Liveaboard

Bahamas, *Explorer Ventures* Liveaboard

Roatan, Anthony's Key Resort

Grand Turk, Oasis Divers and Osprey Beach Hotel

Bonaire, Buddy Dive Resort

Curacao, Go West Diving and Kura Hulanda Lodge

Catalina, Scuba Luv and Pavilion Hotel

St. Lucia, Anse Chastanet Resort

Cozumel, Chili Charters, with Safari Inn and Casa Mexicana



FIELD SURVEY TRIPS



INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Thirteen motivated young adults participated in the REEF Marine Conservation Internship in 2015. Through the diverse internship program, they gained experience in education, data management, research techniques, communications, and more.

Interns play an irreplaceable role at REEF, assisting with important invasive lionfish research, leading education and outreach events, and offering a passionate, fresh perspective and energy to the organization. The internship program has a notable impact on each intern's life and future career.

In 2015, two previous REEF interns, Amy Lee and Ellie Splain, **joined REEF as full-time staff!**

► www.REEF.org/internship



EXPLORERS PROGRAM

The Explorers Program continued to offer educational sessions to school groups, scuba clubs, environmental groups, and others traveling to Key Largo, Florida. Participating in the Volunteer Fish Survey Project or observing an invasive lionfish dissection offers groups the **opportunity to learn through hands-on, experiential education** and make a difference through volunteering. Explorers Programs also incorporate local marine ecology and environmental studies to give groups a comprehensive educational experience.

► www.REEF.org/explorers



EDUCATION PROGRAMS

REEF'S OCEAN EXPLORERS CAMP

In 2015, REEF launched the Ocean Explorers Summer Camp, five-day education programs offered to children between the ages of 8 and 14. The summer day camp program was created to engage more youth in citizen science, ocean stewardship, and the marine conservation efforts of REEF.

Three weeks of summer camp were offered at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo, and **34 children participated**. Activities included snorkeling at the coral reef, kayaking through mangrove trails, a trip on a glass bottom boat, fish scavenger hunts at the park aquarium, trash clean-ups at the beach, marine science lessons, and crafts. The camp received excellent reviews from campers and parents alike. REEF's Ocean Explorers Summer Camp will continue for a second year in 2016.

REEF IN THE CLASSROOM

In addition to groups joining our staff at REEF Headquarters, many US high schools, scouting groups, and colleges use the Volunteer Fish Survey Project in their local programs to provide students a firsthand experience on how to conduct fish surveys and analyze their results. In 2015, teachers from Hawaii, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, Texas, and Vermont incorporated REEF programs in their classroom and field curriculums.





Signing up as a member is free and easy at www.REEF.org/join

REEF MEMBERSHIP

In 2015, REEF welcomed **3,361 new members, bringing the total number of REEF members to 62,551**. As a major milestone, we added our **60,000th member** during our first ever membership drive, "REEF's Membership Madness." This campaign, held in April 2015, was a great success – REEF gave away a free wetsuit to a lucky new member and doubled the amount of new members usually recruited that month.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

- Membership is FREE
- Receive the monthly e-newsletter, *Making It Count*
- Attend free online Fishinars
- Track your fish and invertebrate sightings online
- Get first access to REEF Trips and other special expeditions

► www.REEF.org/join

FACES OF REEF

REEF'S 60,000th MEMBER – MICHELLE ROGERS

REEF welcomed our **60,000th member in 2015, Michelle Rogers**. A certified diver for three years, Michelle learned how to be a better steward of our planet's ocean through the diving community in south Florida. To do her part, Michelle picks up marine debris and eats lionfish whenever she sees it on a restaurant menu. Michelle joined REEF after a luncheon with a diving friend who told her about REEF Trips and participating in fish surveys.

Michelle wants to be a better diver, a more ocean eco-friendly human, and to help efforts in ocean conservation. Being a member of REEF will certainly help her reach those goals!



REEF 2015 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – ED MARTIN

REEF was proud to name **Ed Martin**, of Islamorada, Florida, as our 2015 Volunteer of the Year. Ed became a REEF member in 2012, and has since conducted **60 REEF surveys** in the Tropical Western Atlantic (TWA) region. He achieved expert surveyor status in 2015 and is a **member of the Century Club**, having recorded at least 100 fish species on a one tank dive.

Ed also dedicates his survey skills, ingenuity, and countless hours of time to REEF's Invasive Lionfish fieldwork. He continually goes above and beyond by supplying ideas and tools to support this important research. We are lucky and thankful to have a super volunteer who contributes to REEF in so many ways. **Thank you and congratulations, Ed!**





FISHINARS

REEF continued to offer our online Fishinar program in 2015, **with 27 exciting sessions that attracted over 1,200 members**. Our archives now contain over 100 sessions. Through these fun, fishy identification sessions, REEF has truly innovated the future of marine education. Members can now enjoy the thrill of ocean discovery in the comfort of their own home, boat, or wherever there is access to the Internet.

Fishinar topics include identification of marine life species, as well as a variety of ocean topics. REEF introduced Fishinars as our own style of webinar in 2011 to spread our marine conservation programs and fish identification training to an international audience. These short, interactive, and fun online webinars have developed quite a following, and they are offered free to REEF members.

► www.REEF.org/fishinars

FIELD STATIONS

14 new Field Stations signed up in 2015 to act as local representatives and promote REEF in their area, bringing the total to 290. Each Field Station serves as an active center of outreach and education for our organization. Many offer REEF Fish Identification Courses, organize survey dives, and may sell underwater paper, slates, and related fishwatching materials.

► www.REEF.org/resources/fieldstations



DIVE SHOWS

REEF was present at **six dive shows** throughout the US in 2015, including:

- Long Beach Scuba Show, Long Beach, CA
- Our World Underwater, Rosemont, IL, and Dallas, TX
- Boston Sea Rovers, Boston, MA
- Beneath the Sea, Secaucus, NJ
- DEMA show, Orlando, FL

These trade shows are an excellent way for REEF to strengthen ties with existing members, network with existing and prospective Field Stations, show off new products in the REEF store, give volunteers an opportunity to rub elbows with other REEF enthusiasts and staff, and tell show-goers about REEF's mission and programs.



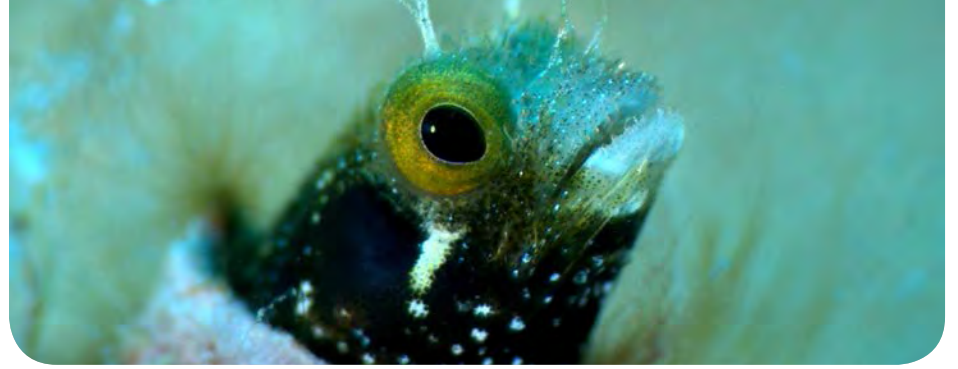
SOCIAL MEDIA

REEF has established an active online presence on Facebook as a method to engage, cultivate relationships, educate, and involve our REEF members and the general public. We maintain a general REEF Facebook page, as well as one specific to the Invasive Lionfish Program. Both pages are frequently updated with educational and entertaining content. You can also follow REEF on Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

- ▶ www.facebook.com/REEF.org
- ▶ www.facebook.com/REEFLionfish
- ▶ www.twitter.com/REEF_org
- ▶ www.youtube.com/user/WeSpeakFish
- ▶ www.instagram.com/REEF_org



OUTREACH & TRAINING

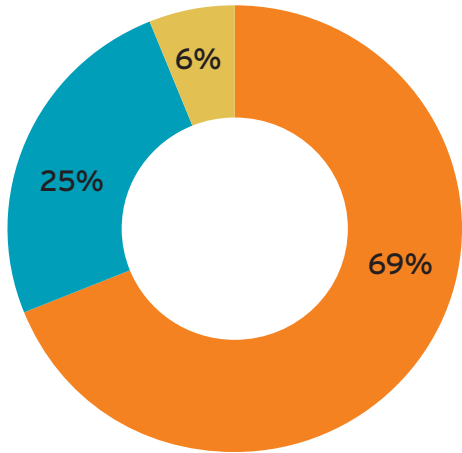


FISH AND FRIENDS

Now in its seventh year, REEF continues to attract a standing room only crowd at this monthly social event and marine science seminar. Fish and Friends is presented at REEF Headquarters on the second Tuesday of every month. Speakers present a variety of topics from diving medicine, to exploring far-flung parts of the ocean, to updates on REEF's programs.



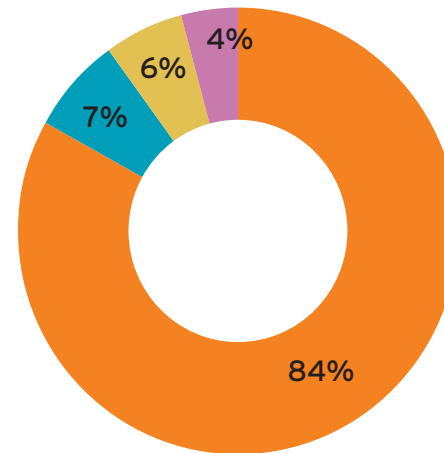
REEF's ability to fulfill our mission, conserve marine environments, and provide meaningful programs is dependent on strong financial operations. This requires focused, strategic financial management centered on our core values. We strive to run a lean and efficient operation – keeping overhead expenses low and allocating funds directly to quality programs and research.



INCOME

- \$894,915 - Grants, Contracts, and Program Revenue
- \$323,218 - Individual and Corporate Contributions
- \$72,203 - Field Supplies and Survey Materials Merchandise

\$1,290,336 - Total Income



EXPENSES

- \$1,044,898 - Programs
- \$87,979 - Fundraising
- \$74,215 - Administrative
- \$44,489 - Merchandise

\$1,250,681 - Total Expenses

Complete and professionally prepared financial statements will be available by August 1, 2016

HELP REEF PROTECT OUR OCEANS

Donations to REEF from members and other supporters are its lifeblood. There are many reasons to donate to REEF. Your gift will help REEF:

- **Protect marine species** around the world
- **Supply policymakers with data** to strengthen conservation measures for endangered or threatened species
- **Combat invasive species** that impact native fishes and ocean creatures
- Support **marine education initiatives** that provide critter identification seminars, internships, and outreach to young ocean enthusiasts

REEF is a 501(c)(3) US charity and all donations are tax-deductible. REEF takes great pride in the extremely high percentage of our funds that go to our programs and activities.

SUSTAINER CLUB AND DONOR BENEFITS

Donors who give \$1,000 or more in a year join our most generous supporters in REEF's Sustainers Club. Sustainers receive early notice of REEF trips and invitations to special events. Each spring, REEF hosts an exclusive event for Sustainers. Sustainers also receive special perks at the annual "REEF Fest" event in Key Largo, Florida.

THE GIVING REEF

The "Giving REEF" acknowledges supporters who donate \$500 or more. The Giving REEF is located at Headquarters in Key Largo, Florida. We hand paint each fish, which features the donor's name on a plaque. Donors receive a photo of their fish via email, and each fish is based on giving levels: \$500- Jack; \$1,000- Angelfish; \$2,500- Grouper; and \$5,000- Shark.

TYPES OF DONATIONS

Opportunities for gifts to REEF include:

Cash Gifts - You may send a check to REEF Headquarters at P.O. Box 370246, Key Largo, FL 33037, or give online.

In-kind Donations - Gifts of office equipment and supplies, diving gear, silent auction items, and any other contributions of personal property that would help REEF fulfill its mission are always welcome!

Gift of Stock - You can donate stock to REEF, and you don't have to pay any capital gains tax on the gift.

Matching Employee Contributions - Many companies match employee contributions to non-profits. Ask your employer, send REEF their matching gift form, and we will be happy to fill out any required paperwork.

Planned Gifts and Bequests - Ensure future generations continue to support marine conservation initiatives by leaving a gift to REEF in your will or trust, by beneficiary designation, or another form of planned gift. Many gifts cost you nothing now, there is no minimum contribution, and there are no binding contracts.

Charitable Trusts - You may also make donations through a charitable remainder trust or a charitable lead trust.

Please call Headquarters at 305-852-0030 for more information about any of these types of gifts.



▶ www.REEF.org/donate

HOW AND WHY TO GIVE



BENEFACTORS: \$2,500+

Janet and Doug Camp
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Paul Humann
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Mel McCombie and Harris Friedberg
Brian Miller
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John and Bonnie Strand

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Martha Austin and Capt Alan Wilson
Philip Balbi
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Martha Barrow

Marta and Paul Bonatz
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Mary and Brad Brown
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Rachel Capoccia
Richard Collins
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Lowell Ericsson
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Coral Reef Park Concessions
Explorer Ventures
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NOAA Center for Coastal Fisheries
and Habitat Research
NOAA Coral Reef Conservation
Program
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Contributions from 1/1/2014 and
3/31/2015

*Thank you to all the photographers
who donated pictures in 2015!*



To donate online, please
visit REEF.org/donate

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EXPLORE. DISCOVER. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

PHOTO CREDITS

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Page 4: Diver photo by Jeffrey Haines,
Sargassum Triggerfish and Creole Wrasse by Janna Nichols

Page 6: Lionfish on reef photo by Rich Carey

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Live feed photo by Joshua Stuart

Page 8: Reef photo by Rosie Pongracz

Page 13: Jewel Moray by Carol Cox, Spinyhead Blenny by Jonathan
Lavan, and Branching Vase Sponge by Janna Nichols

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Group photo by Janna Nichols

Page 16: Sand Tilefish photo by Janna Nichols

Page 17: Diver by Ron Jucas, Beaubrummel Damselfish by Carol Cox

Page 18: Background image by Janna Nichols

Back Cover: Background image by Paul Humann



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