



Our Mission: Reef Environmental Education Foundation (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.

## PROTECTING MARINE LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION, SERVICE, AND RESEARCH



# 2013

# ANNUAL REPORT



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## INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 2013, eleven talented and enthusiastic individuals were given the opportunity to gain key career experience through REEF's Marine Conservation Internship. The program provides an in-depth look into day-to-day operations of REEF. Geared towards young adults, the four-month internship offers an array of diverse experiences including scientific diving, outreach and education, data collection and management, non-profit operations, and public speaking. Interns also have many opportunities to dive and volunteer with partner organizations in the Florida Keys and South Florida. Using experiences gained at REEF, many interns move on to work at other prestigious conservation organizations and agencies, or enter graduate school programs.

## KEYS EDUCATION PROGRAM

In 2013, REEF expanded the group education programs offered at Headquarters in Key Largo, FL. These programs give groups the opportunity to learn about marine environments through hands-on education and volunteering. Programs range from two-hour seminar style workshops to 3-5 day adventures in the field and in the classroom. Custom marine science programs cater to the unique needs and interests of a variety of groups, including K-12 classes, college students, dive groups, and adult travel programs.

## REEF IN THE CLASSROOM

Several high schools, scouting and youth groups, and colleges use the Volunteer Fish Survey Project to provide students a firsthand experience on how to conduct field research and analyze their results. In 2013, over a dozen teachers incorporated REEF into their classroom and field study programs. Participating schools included Crystal Lake Middle School in Polk County (FL), The Drew School in San Francisco (CA), John Abbott College in Montreal (Canada), and Edison Intermediate School in Columbus (OH), among many others.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

REEF has established an active online presence on Facebook as a method to engage, educate, and involve our REEF members, as well as recruit new members. Please join us! [www.facebook.com/REEF.org](https://www.facebook.com/REEF.org)

## FISHINARS

REEF continued to expand our online Fishinar program in 2013, with 19 exciting sessions that attracted over 1,400 members. 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. Sessions are recorded so members are able to view them at their convenience. Fishinar topics include fish ID for specific groups of species, as well as for different ocean regions. In 2013, REEF held special sessions about topics ranging from cleaning stations with Ned and Anna DeLoach, to the process of marine guide illustration with artist Val Kells. 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.

▶ [REEF.org/fishinars](http://REEF.org/fishinars)

## PUBLIC EVENTS

To help spread the word about REEF's programs and volunteer opportunities, REEF participates in numerous public events each year. In 2013, we attended several dive shows, including the Tacoma (Washington) Dive Expo, Our World Underwater (Chicago), Beneath the Sea (NY/NJ), and The Diving and Equipment and Marketing Association or DEMA (Orlando). Our staff and volunteers also joined in many community events such as beach days, ocean festivals, and environmental fairs. To share the latest research findings from our programs, REEF staff participated in two large scientific conferences, the International Coral Reef Symposium (Cairns, Australia) and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Meeting (Corpus Christi, TX).



# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH







## REEF VOLUNTEERS

In 2013, REEF welcomed 4,168 new members, bringing the total number of REEF members to 55,537. Our diverse membership of divers, snorkelers, students, and armchair naturalists stand behind our mission, and volunteers are at the heart of REEF's grassroots marine conservation programs. The depth and scope of volunteer involvement varies widely. This year, we are proud to share the stories of some of our standout volunteers, who inspire us everyday to champion the cause of marine conservation.

### MEET CATIE ALVES

Member since 2013

Catie started as a Marine Conservation Intern during the summer 2013 program. REEF was so impressed with her contribution that she was asked to stay on through the end of 2013, fulfilling a leadership role during the fall internship program. Catie is now a Marine Science Teaching Assistant and Lab Manager at the Williams-Mystic Maritime Studies Program in Connecticut. We are always proud to see our interns go on to make an impact.

### MEET ROGER GRIMES

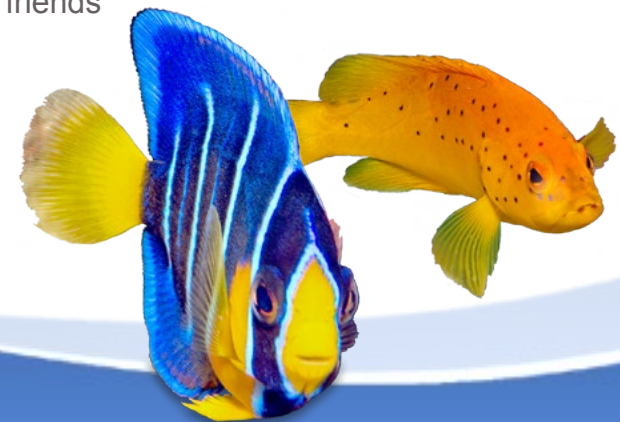
Member since 2012

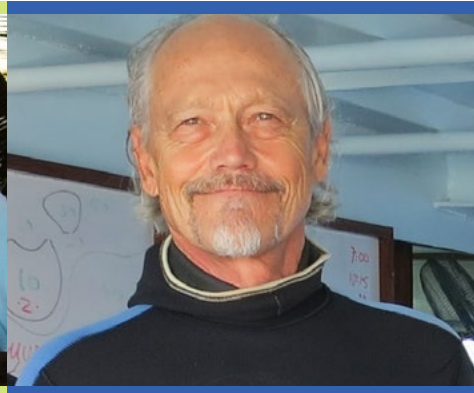
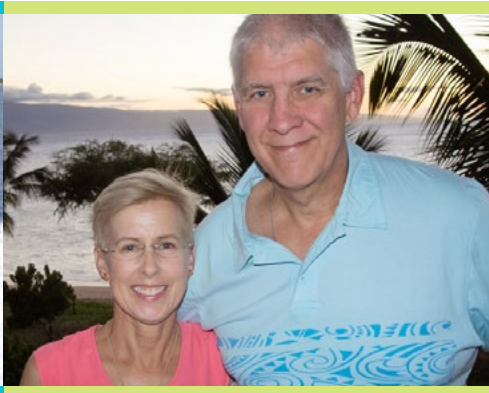
Living in Key Largo, FL, Roger is an example of how one individual can make a huge difference for an organization like REEF. Since 2012, the Microsoft Matching Gifts Programs has contributed almost \$8,000 to match over 450 hours volunteered by Roger. He and his wife Patricia are dedicated to REEF and especially the lionfish project. They even serve lionfish to their friends whenever possible!

### MEET ED MARTIN

Member since 2012

Ed is an active REEF volunteer, avid fish surveyor, and expert lionfish collector and expert lionfish collector based in the Florida Keys. He generously donates his time, skills, and resources to REEF's lionfish research field projects, including a new GoPro Hero 3+ and a homemade PVC frame for the camera (now dubbed the "Ed Pro"), as well as his personal boat for field work.





**VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR**

**MEET BRENDA HITT**

Member since 1994

Brenda, from St. Pete Beach in Florida, is a founding REEF member. After becoming an active surveyor and member of the Advanced Assessment Team in 2001, she was asked to assist with a then new REEF expedition to the Cayman Islands in what would become the Grouper Moon Project. Brenda has participated annually and relishes her time spent underwater with the Nassau Grouper spawning aggregation. She described the experience as “exciting beyond belief and truly awe-inspiring.”

**MEET STEVE AND MARY DINGELDEIN**

Members since 1997

Long time donors, Steve and Mary have been a part of the Sustainer’s Club (\$1,000+ per year) since 1998 and have participated in several REEF Field Survey Trips with Ned and Anna DeLoach in Bonaire. Their whole family SCUBA dives, and their love for the ocean and REEF has even inspired their daughter to recently complete a Master’s degree in Marine Biology. Their generosity helps ensure that REEF’s conservation projects and critical core programs can continue.

**MEET DOUG HARDER**

Member since 1996

With 1,060 surveys under his belt and over 1,300 hours logged underwater, Doug is part of the Golden Hamlet Club for members who have submitted 1,000 or more surveys. He is on REEF’s Advanced Assessment Team in both the Tropical Western Atlantic and Hawaii, and has participated in dozens of REEF Field Survey Trips through the years. Doug has also assisted with special projects, including the Grouper Moon Project and artificial reef monitoring in the Florida Keys. Doug loves being a volunteer surveyor and credits REEF for inspiring him to identify over 1,120 different species of fish!

**MEET CARLOS AND ALLISON ESTAPÉ**

Member since 1996

Carlos and Allison call the Florida Keys home, and they try and dive as often as they can. As Tropical Western Atlantic REEF Advanced Assessment Team members, skilled lionfish hunters, expert underwater photographers, and PADI Open Water Scuba Instructors, this diving duo is instrumental to REEF’s fieldwork conducted in the Upper Florida Keys. Most recently, they have raised interest in the 100 Fish Species Challenge, or “Century Dive,” in the Keys, whereby a REEF surveyor finds at least 100 species of fish on one dive. Congratulations to Carlos and Allison for being REEF’s 2013 Volunteers of the Year!



The REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project is our cornerstone citizen science program. Started in 1993, this project engages volunteer SCUBA divers and snorkelers to collect and report information on marine fish populations as well as sea turtles and select invertebrate and algae species. One of the most effective and powerful ocean citizen science programs, it has generated the world's largest database on marine fishes. These data are being used to better understand and protect ocean ecosystems worldwide.

In 2013, 10,371 REEF surveys were conducted. Approximately half of those (5,529) were conducted at sites in the Tropical Western Atlantic. To date\*, 180,827 REEF surveys have been conducted at 10,985 sites. 14,160 volunteers have participated.

\*Survey numbers as of April 14, 2014.



## 20TH ANNIVERSARY AND REEF FEST

In the summer of 1993, a group of pioneering volunteers conducted the first REEF fish surveys off Key Largo, Florida. Twenty years later, the Volunteer Fish Survey Project and other REEF initiatives are leading the way as innovative and effective marine conservation programs. To celebrate 20 years of success, staff and board members hosted "REEF Fest" in August 2013, which featured four days of diving, learning, and parties in Key Largo.

## MILESTONE - NEW DATA ENTRY CAPABILITIES

In 2013, we proudly released the next generation of REEF survey technology, the REEF Data Entry Program. When surveying began in 1993, divers and snorkelers wrote out each sighted fish species on a slate and submitted the surveys to the database using paper scantron forms. We soon developed pre-printed underwater survey paper to make surveying easier, and in 2005 we said goodbye to bubble-filling and premiered online data entry using the Internet. The time had come to innovate yet again.

With our members in mind, we looked to develop a data entry tool that would meet the varied needs of our surveyors, including those who are traveling or live in areas with limited internet access. Released in June, the REEF Survey Data Entry Program allows our volunteers to enter surveys without an internet connection. When they have access to the web, users can then logon to the REEF online entry portal, complete error checking, and submit the surveys. The free program has quickly become a favorite for many of our surveyors. [▶ www.REEF.org/dataentryprogram](http://www.REEF.org/dataentryprogram)

## EXPANSIONS

After several years of planning and collaborating with marine scientists from NOAA and local divers, REEF expanded and enhanced its Volunteer Fish Survey Project for the South Atlantic States, including North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Staff developed new training and survey materials as well as a new invertebrate and algae monitoring program to serve as a companion to the existing fish survey program. To launch the new region, REEF and NOAA led two days of training workshops and survey dives during *Bringing Shipwrecks to Life*, a program for divers to appreciate North Carolina shipwrecks as historical and biological treasures.

# VOLUNTEER FISH SURVEY PROJECT



## AAT AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

In 2013, REEF welcomed 17 new members into the Advanced Assessment Team (AAT), bringing the total number of a-fish-ionados in this group to 381. Volunteers in the AAT contribute Expert-level survey data and participate in special survey projects. Collectively, the AAT has conducted 68,572 surveys throughout REEF's project regions.

Members of the AAT assisted REEF with several projects in 2013, including the 11th year of monitoring fish and invertebrate populations at two US National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS): Monterey Bay NMS in California and Olympic Coast NMS in Washington. This year was also the first year of a new long-term monitoring project in the San Juan Islands of Washington State, in partnership with the University of California Davis' SeaDoc Society.

▶ [www.REEF.org/programs/volunteersurvey/aat](http://www.REEF.org/programs/volunteersurvey/aat)

## GREAT ANNUAL FISH COUNT

We celebrated the Great Annual Fish Count (GAFC)'s 22nd year. 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. The largest GAFC events were held in the Northeast US and in Monterey, California.

▶ [www.fishcount.org](http://www.fishcount.org)

## FIELD STATIONS

Sixteen new Field Stations signed up to act as local representatives and promote REEF in their area in 2013, bringing the total number to 299. 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 they may sell underwater paper, slate, and related fishwatching materials.

▶ [www.REEF.org/resources/fieldstations](http://www.REEF.org/resources/fieldstations)

## DATA USE AND PUBLICATIONS

REEF's Volunteer Fish Survey Project generates valuable data on ocean populations, while expanding scientific awareness among its participants. The extensive REEF data set is an important source of information for documenting changes in populations and community structure as well as cataloging biological diversity. REEF provides data to many scientists and researchers from academic institutions and resource management agencies each year.

In 2013, REEF fulfilled **23 requests for data files**, for scientists at institutions such as Simon Frasier University, University of York, University of Miami, SeaDoc Society, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Florida Fish and Wildlife, and NOAA, among others.

In 2013, researchers published **six articles in scientific, peer-reviewed publications** based on REEF Survey Project data:

**Behavior Webs of Piscivores at Subtropical Live-Bottom Reefs.** Bulletin of Marine Science. Auster et al.

**Additive Partitioning of Coral Reef Fish Diversity Across Hierarchical Spatial Scales Throughout the Caribbean.** PLoS ONE. Francisco-Ramos et al.

**Comparing Diversity Data Collected Using a Protocol Designed for Volunteers with Results from a Professional Alternative.** Methods in Ecology and Evolution. Holt et al.

**Global Population Trends and Human Use Patterns of Manta and Mobula Rays.** PLoS ONE. Ward-Paige et al.

**Fish Population Fluctuation Estimates Based on Fifteen Years of REEF Volunteer Diver Data For the Monterey Peninsula, California.** CalCOFI Reports. Wolfe and Pattengill-Semmens

**Estimating Fish Populations From REEF Citizen Science Volunteer Diver Order-of-Magnitude Surveys.** CalCOFI Reports. Wolfe and Pattengill-Semmens

▶ [www.REEF.org/db/publications](http://www.REEF.org/db/publications)



# VOLUNTEER FISH SURVEY PROJECT





REEF's Invasive Lionfish Program continues to lead the way in developing and implementing research initiatives, response strategies, outreach and awareness, and control programs throughout the region. Invasive lionfish, native to the Indo-Pacific and Red Sea, are severely impacting western Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystems. Though populations continue to increase throughout the region, the good news is that continued removal efforts are successfully reducing local populations and minimizing impacts.

## 2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Continuing research on lionfish removal success, trapping, movement, and impacts as well as facilitating the research of others through training and consultation
- Conducting 16 lionfish collecting and handling workshops for more than 767 people throughout the Southeast US, with funding support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Co-organizing and hosting the sixth annual lionfish session at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Conference
- Co-organizing the first workshop on Invasive Lionfish in the Marketplace: Challenges and Opportunities, with 43 representatives from more than 20 countries
- Co-authoring the International Coral Reef Initiative's Regional Strategy for the Control of Invasive Lionfish in the Wider Caribbean
- Removing 2,790 lionfish through REEF Lionfish Derbies in the Florida Keys, Bahamas, and Southeast Florida
- Presenting at the first Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Lionfish Summit
- Serving on the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species
- Advising the Federal Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force on development of the US National Lionfish Response Plan
- Featuring the lionfish issue in major media, including print, news, and social media

REEF's partnerships with NOAA, 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.

## 2013 PUBLICATIONS

**Regional Strategy for the Control of Invasive Lionfish in the Wider Caribbean.** ICRI. Gómez Lozano et al.

**Native predators do not influence invasion success of Pacific lionfish on Caribbean reefs.** PLoS ONE. Hackerott et al.

**Diet richness of invasive Indo-Pacific lionfish revealed by DNA barcoding.** Marine Ecology Progress Series. Côté et al.



► [www.REEF.org/lionfish](http://www.REEF.org/lionfish)

# INVASIVE LIONFISH RESEARCH PROGRAM







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.

The research focuses on Little Cayman, which has one of the largest (and one of a few) known spawning aggregations of Nassau Grouper in the Caribbean. Over 4,000 grouper amass in one location for 10 days following winter full moons. Since 2002, REEF and CIDOE have studied this amazing natural phenomenon, using a variety of research techniques from diver surveys to state-of-the-art technology. The research has yielded ground-breaking results that have led to improved conservation for the species. Major program partners in 2013 included Scripps Institution of Oceanography and Oregon State University.

2013 was a very exciting year. The number of fish at the aggregation site continued to increase, and there were many "teenagers" (6-8 year olds), coming to spawn for the first time. The number of spawning bursts and the number of nights spawning occurred also increased. REEF piloted several new research techniques, including:

- The installation of GoPro video monitoring stations throughout the spawning aggregation site to monitor fish movement and behaviors
- Deployment of passive acoustic hydrophones to record courtship sounds of aggregating grouper
- Egg collection and fertilization research

### **GROUPEL MOON EDUCATION PROGRAM**

To ensure long-term success and effective conservation of Nassau Grouper, REEF and CIDOE have conducted extensive outreach through news media, public service announcements, printed material, and documentaries. With support from Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, REEF created the Grouper Education Program. The curriculum focuses on bringing the Nassau Grouper into Caribbean elementary and high school classrooms through lesson plans and live-feed webcasts that connect students in their classrooms with scientists in the field. These unique and exciting live webcasts utilize underwater video technology. This allows students to engage with Grouper Moon scientists and virtually experience what it's like swimming among the thousands of Nassau Grouper that gather on the west end of Little Cayman during winter full moons.

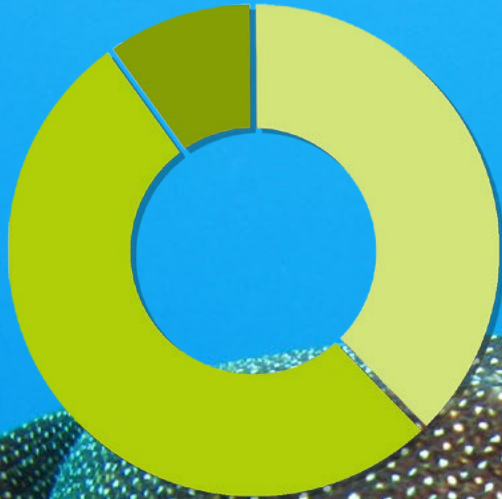
After initially piloting the program with one school on Grand Cayman, we expanded the program in 2013 to more classrooms on Grand Cayman and initiated the program at a school on Cayman Brac.

▶ [www.REEF.org/groupermoonproject](http://www.REEF.org/groupermoonproject)

# « GROUPEL MOON PROJECT »

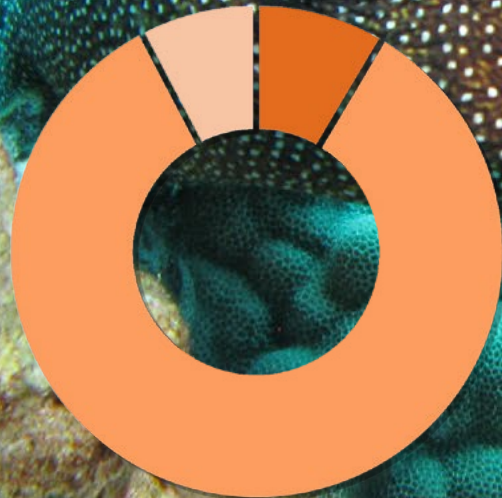


REEF's ability to fulfill our mission, conserve marine environments, and provide meaningful programs is dependent on strong financial operations. This requires focused, strategic financial management centered on our core values. We strive to run a lean and efficient operation—keeping overhead expenses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



### INCOME:

- \$316,357.33 - Individual and Corporate Contributions
- \$436,857.84 - Grants, Contracts, & Program Revenue
- \$ 82,768.25 - Merchandise
- \$835,983.42 - Total Income



### EXPENSES:

- \$ 64,368.54 - Fundraising
- \$634,882.93 - Programs
- \$ 58,054.25 - Administrative
- \$757,305.72 - Total Expenses



Reflecting on our successes in 2013, we are inspired and excited to look forward. In 2014, we will continue to have a positive impact on the environment through the expansion of our marine conservation research and education programs. REEF is working diligently to protect marine environments and fulfill our mission by:

### **PARTNERING WITH DIVERSE CONSTITUENTS**

We plan to: provide scientists, researchers, and policymakers access to the largest fish sightings database in the world, delivering the data they need to protect marine resources; conduct ground breaking research to minimize the impact of invasive lionfish on western Atlantic ecosystem; and collaborate on the Grouper Moon Project with the Cayman Islands Government, as well as Caymanian businesses and educators.

### **EXPANDING EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

We plan to: diversify Fishinars to include more advanced topics and specialized guest speakers; increase group hands-on education programs at Headquarters in Key Largo, FL and develop new classroom education curricula so that we can foster a passion for the ocean, even for those who don't live near it.

### **ENHANCING OUR INNOVATIVE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAMS**

We plan to: develop the Field Survey Trips in new and exciting destinations; continue to expand the Volunteer Fish Survey Project to new regions such as the Coral Triangle, Australia, and the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean; capitalize on technologies to improve data submission and visualization; and improve the volunteer experience.

REEF members are essential in achieving the accomplishments listed throughout this report and help drive our future endeavors. With their support, we look forward to reaching many more important milestones in 2014 as we continue to fulfill our mission through meaningful marine conservation programs.



# LOOKING FORWARD



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Thank you to all the photographers who donated pictures in 2013!

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