



You may have heard of the REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project. We'd love your involvement!

### **What is it?**

REEF enlists the help of recreational divers and snorkelers (Citizen Scientists!) to keep track of marine life they see in the water. This data goes into the largest publicly available marine life database of its kind, and is used by scientists, researchers, teachers, students, citizens, policy makers, etc. We've been doing this since 1993, so over 20 years now.

### **Where can I do surveys?**

Anywhere you dive (or snorkel) within these regions: Tropical Western Atlantic, East Coast of the US & Canada, West Coast of the US & Canada (including Alaska), Tropical Eastern Pacific, Hawaiian Islands, South Pacific, Central Indo Pacific and Eastern Atlantic Mediterranean.

### **When can I do surveys?**

Anytime you're in the water. Any time of year, any time of day or night, basically anytime you like! We encourage data collecting year 'round, whenever possible. You can get started right away, as long as you can positively identify the fish you record on your survey. *When in doubt, leave it out.*

### **Who do I go with?**

Anyone you like. Your buddy need not conduct a survey if they don't want to. But it certainly is more fun with two! Each diver should have their own member number, do their own survey, log their own data, and submit their own data online. *Remember:* One survey per diver, per dive. Surveying can be done on your own, or as an organized group activity.

### **What do I survey?**

All fish you see, and in temperate water regions, a select list of invertebrates/algae.

### **What equipment is needed?**

You'll need a **slate** to write on. You can use one of your own, or one of REEF's slates specially made for surveying. You can make life even easier on yourself by using **REEF waterproof underwater paper** that has the most common fish in your region already printed on it. Just circle the species as you see them, and you're on your way. There are also **laminated color ID cards** you can take with you in the water. An **ID book** for the region is also needed to help you positively identify what you saw. All of these are available in the **REEF online store** at [www.REEF.org/store](http://www.REEF.org/store).

### **Don't I need to be trained first?**

Taking a class at your local Field Station is certainly the fastest way to learn how to ID a lot of fish, but if that option isn't available, you can get started on your very next dive. Our **Fishinars (short online Webinar-style fish ID classes)** and over 120 archived Fishinars are also a great way to start and continue learning. You can find the schedule and archive list at [www.REEF.org/fishinars](http://www.REEF.org/fishinars).

*Updated February 2017*

### **What if I don't know the names of all the fish I see?**

Don't worry! Just record the ones you DO know, even if it's just one. Leave off the rest. You'll learn as you go and get better with each survey you do. (hint: **taking photos** of mystery fish, or sketching key features on your slate is a great idea!) Look them up in a book after your dive.

### **What's my time commitment?**

Whatever length of time you want to spend in the water, plus the time it takes to enter your data online. (about 10 min)

### **What's the survey method?**

Just go on your dive or snorkel like you usually do – wandering around, looking in nooks and crannies, in any depth of water. You'll be recording the relative abundance of the total number of fish of each species you see cumulatively on your dive, not exact counts.

- S=Single (1)
- F=Few (2-10)
- M=Many (11-100)
- A=Abundant (101+)

### **How do I submit my data?**

It's all done **online** nowadays! (no more paper scanforms) Join REEF first (it's free) and you'll be assigned a member number. Log in using that number and your last name to enter your survey data online. <http://www.reef.org/dataentry>. We also now have a data entry program for Mac and PC (free!) that allows you to enter data with or without an internet connection. <http://www.reef.org/dataentryprogram>

### **What happens as I get better at this?**

REEF has 5 Experience Levels. When you first start out, you're a level 1 surveyor. Then, by accumulating certain numbers of surveys and passing tests for levels 2-5, you can work your way up to the highest level. To arrange for a test, contact [REEFHQ@REEF.org](mailto:REEFHQ@REEF.org)

### **Why do surveys?**

Harnessing the observation power of large numbers of recreational divers and snorkelers just makes good sense. REEF data have been used time and again by scientists, researchers and policy-makers.

### **This sounds like a great activity for a Dive Club (or shop) – how do we get involved?**

You can teach your own classes to your group using REEF curriculum, watch Fishinars and organize REEF survey dives for fun. You might also be interested in becoming a REEF Field Station.

So get started today! **Join REEF** for your **free** membership.

<http://www.reef.org/join>

Please feel free to email me with any questions you might have. I'm here to help!

**Janna Nichols, REEF Outreach Coordinator:** [janna@REEF.org](mailto:janna@REEF.org)

REEF website: [www.REEF.org](http://www.REEF.org)

REEF Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/REEF.org>

*Updated February 2017*