



REEF-in-Brief

*The e-Newsletter of the
Reef Environmental Education Foundation*

April 2005

1. **The 14th Great Annual Fish Count** - REEF's signature yearly event - The Great Annual Fish Count (GAFC) - is coming this July! The GAFC is a great event that drives attention to marine conservation as well as the great work REEF does year-round. If you haven't done so before, the GAFC provides a great opportunity to learn REEF Fish ID and conduct surveys, meet other individuals and dive operators who support marine conservation, and have a lot of fun! Event organizers throughout REEF's survey regions are currently planning and registering their events with us.

Information on the event itself, including schedules by location, can be seen at www.fishcount.org - the GAFC's official website. If you don't see anything scheduled where you like to dive, check back often, new events are being posted all the time. Also, let your local dive shop or club know that you are interested and urge them to find out more about it. If you are feeling really motivated, get involved and organize your own event - it's easy and fun. Everything you need is on the website.

One thing to look for with this year's GAFC is the Fundraising Challenge. This is a great way to help raise money for REEF while having fun participating in the GAFC. We have a lot of prizes to give away to top fundraisers this year. Last year's GAFC prizes included a Peter Hughes Dive Trip, marine-related artwork, dive clothing, and a lot more! Information on the GAFC Fundraising Challenge can be found at:

http://www.fishcount.org/about/gafc_fc.html

REEF's Great Annual Fish Count is an event that makes a real difference! Last year's GAFC generated nearly 2,000 surveys in the month of July and boasted over 80 events worldwide. We hope to make the 2005 GAFC bigger and better than ever! We hope you get involved!

2. **REEF Grouper Moon Project** - This year marks the fourth year of REEF's Grouper Moon Project, which studies one of the last remaining Nassau grouper spawning aggregations of any appreciable size known in the Caribbean. Although normally solitary and territorial, Nassau grouper travel over great distances during the winter full moons to "group" together and spawn.

Each year, a team of REEF staff and volunteers join staff from the Cayman Islands Department of the Environment (CIDOE) to visually document an aggregation on Little Cayman. They record the number of fish, average size, behavior, and spawning activity. In 2005, a new component was also added to address many unanswered questions about the grouper aggregations. The study addresses where the grouper come from, whether they attend every year, and what occurs during the aggregation cycle. The study aims to evaluate whether newly enacted harvest restrictions are



What's in this issue:

- 1 - [14th Great Annual Fish Count](#)
- 2 - [Grouper Moon Project Update](#)
- 3 - [REEF's Earth Day Dive](#)
- 4 - [Take A Great REEF Trip!](#)
- 5 - [Field Station of the Month](#)
- 6 - [Upcoming Events](#)



REEF's 14th Great Annual Fish Count is coming this July! Get Involved!



warranted and merit extension beyond the 8-year sunset clause.

Thanks to a grant from the NOAA International Coral Reef Conservation Program and additional support from PADI Project AWARE, REEF and researcher Brice Semmens initiated a multi-year acoustic tagging project. The acoustic project involves the installation of 15 hydrophones around Little Cayman Island and acoustical tagging of 50 Nassau grouper. The acoustic tags, which are surgically implanted in the belly of the fish, emit a signal that is picked up by the hydrophone if the fish passes within 500 meters. The hydrophones will record the presence of the tagged grouper for up to 3 years. Stay tuned - as the data starts to come in from the hydrophones, we will keep you posted on the wanderings of grouper!

REEF would like to extend our appreciation to the entire CIDOE team (Phil Bush, Bradley Johnson, Kirsten Luke, and Croy McCoy), the project team members (Judie Clee, Scott Heppell, Brenda Hitt, Brice Semmens and Leslie Whylen), and Peter Hillebrand for their ongoing support and dedication to this project. The Southern Cross Club, McCoy's Fishing and Diving Lodge and the Little Cayman Beach Resort provided generous logistical support. We also thank Raymarine Marine Electronics for their donation of a RADAR system to support CIDOE's enforcement efforts on the Little Cayman spawning aggregation.

To learn more about the Grouper Moon Project and to see collected videos and images, visit <http://www.reef.org/data/groupermoon>.

3. **REEF Dives Into Earth Day** - If you plan to be in or around Key Largo on April 22-23rd, you're in luck! REEF will be hosting a "Dive In To Earth Day" event. Participate in an Underwater Scavenger Hunt, attend a free fish ID class, meet other fish enthusiasts, and win great prizes from World Watersports in Key Largo!

On April 23, 2005, REEF will be holding an Underwater Scavenger Hunt and Earth Day barbeque. Registration is \$20 per person and includes an information packet, disposable underwater camera with film processing, and an afternoon barbeque at Sharkeys Pub and Grill. Divers, snorkelers, families, and visitors are welcome.

The following dive shops are offering a special reduced rate to participating divers and snorkelers. To register, please contact them directly.

Dive-In	Amy Slate's Amoray Dive Resort	It's a Dive Watersports
MM 97.5	MM 104	Marriott Hotel
305-852-1919	305-451-3595	MM 104
		305-453-9881

REEF is also holding a free fish ID class at 7pm on Friday, April 22nd. The class will be held at World Watersports in Key Largo. This class is open to the public and is a great opportunity for divers and snorkelers to brush up on their fish ID skills in preparation for the Earth Day Scavenger Hunt.

World Watersports
MM 100
305-451-0118

For more information, contact the REEF office at 305-852-0030 or email intern@reef.org. We look forward to celebrating Earth Day with you!



One of the acoustically tagged Nassau grouper. External Floy tags were used to enable researchers to visually identify acoustically tagged fish underwater. In an effort to better understand the movement patterns of aggregating grouper, 50 Nassau grouper have been acoustically tagged on Little Cayman island as part of the Grouper Moon Project. Photo by Scott Heppell.



REEF is sponsoring a fun event in Key Largo as part of the "Dive In Earth Day" festivities. If you are interested in participating, have a look at the information on the left. We hope you'll join us!

4. **REEF Field Surveys** - Field Surveys are a great way to escape for a fun and educational dive vacation with REEF! We offer several trips each year giving you the opportunity to visit great locations, learn about fish, conduct REEF surveys, and meet other terrific people with the same interests. Trips are lead by REEF staff and expert volunteers and make for a perfect "volunteer vacation" - have fun while contributing to marine conservation!

REEF has several upcoming trips with space available, but they fill-up fast. So get involved now! More information on the program, trips, and reservations, can be seen at:

<http://www.reef.org/fieldsurv/index.htm>

Here are a couple great trips coming up soon - we hope you join us! -

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary • Cypress Charters • May 10-15, 2005

5 nights/6 days - \$245, includes 3 days of diving (2 days of 2 tank diving and 1 day of 3 tank diving) with Cypress Charters and an organized day of shore diving at Pt. Lobos Marine Reserve (tanks/weights not included for the shore dive). This package does not include lodging (lodging suggestions can be seen on the website.) We will also be doing a behind-the-scenes tour of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. *REEF Fee is \$100 (day-diving prices also available.) This trip will be lead by REEF's Scientific Coordinator, Christy Pattengill-Semmens, Ph.D.

Sosua, Dominican Republic • Northern Coast Diving Center and Sosua By the Sea Hotel • June 11-18, 2005

8 days/7 nights - \$755 (11 dives) - \$880 (16 dives), includes either 5 days of 3-tank dives or 5 days of 2-tank dives plus one additional day of 2-tank dive, lodging in a standard room, and r/t airport transfers. *REEF Fee is \$100. Trip leader is REEF Executive Director, Lad Akins.

5. **Field Station of the Month** - April's REEF Field Station of the Month (FSOM) is the Akumal Dive Shop. They are a new REEF Field Station located in Akumal, Mexico, which is on the Yucatan Peninsula south of Cancun. They are this month's FSOM because of their sponsorship of REEF's second Non-Profit/Academic Field Station (NAFS), Centro Ecologico Akumal (CEA).

The Akumal Dive Shop covers the annual Field Station membership for CEA and also has provided them with a REEF Fish ID curriculum for use in their program. Additionally, the dive shop generously donates time on their boat each week to take CEA staff and volunteers out to conduct REEF survey dives.

The NAFS program, terrific sponsors like the Akumal Dive Shop, and great organizations like CEA, are all part of REEF's innovative partnership efforts with the dive industry. If you would like more information on the program, please visit:

http://www.reef.org/member/fieldstation_info1.htm

We encourage you to support REEF Field Stations, such as the Akumal Dive Shop, the next time you go diving. These dive operators and other organizations show their



REEF Field Survey Participants have a great time as well as contribute valuable data to marine conservation, such as this group in the Pacific Northwest. If cold water isn't your cup of tea - we also have plenty of warm water locations on the 2005 schedule. We hope to see you out there with us!



The Akumal Dive Shop is the REEF Field Station of the Month. Their commitment to marine conservation is apparent through

strong commitment to marine conservation and REEF through their membership in this program.

Akumal Dive Shop: <http://www.akumal.com>
 Centro Ecologico Akumal: <http://www.ceakumal.org>

conservation is apparent through their sponsorship of our second NAFS, Centro Ecologico Akumal.

6. **Upcoming Events** - Ocean Fest Dive & Adventure Sports Expo, April 15, 16 & 17

The Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and the Chambers Beach Council will once again sponsor the 2005 Ocean Fest Dive & Adventure Sports Expo - taking place at Fort Lauderdale Beach on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 15, 16 and 17. Exhibits, vendors, shows, demonstrations and more will be found under the tents lining the beachfront along A1A, south of Las Olas, near the Sheraton Yankee Clipper Hotel.

This event will feature over 200 dive and adventure sports related exhibits under giant tents at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to the dive exhibits, there will be food and beverage vendors, music on the beach, free seminars, raffles, underwater treasure hunts and thousands of dollars in prizes!

Events are planned starting at 5PM on Friday, April 15, through Sunday, April 17. A full schedule of events, seminars, entertainment, exhibitors and more can be found on Ocean Fest's website, www.oceanfest.com.

A portion of the proceeds from Ocean Fest will benefit numerous non-profit and environmental organizations.



If you plan to be in the South Florida area from April 15th-17th, a great thing to do is check out Ocean Fest on the beach in Fort Lauderdale.

See You Next Month!

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please visit our "REEF-in-Brief" page at:

<http://www.reef.org/enews/enews.htm>

To learn more about REEF, visit www.reef.org

