



REEF - in - Brief

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

January 2007

1. Welcome -

Greetings from REEF! We hope the New Year is off to a great start for you and your family. This month, *REEF-in-Brief* highlights a few end-of-2006 accomplishments - a national award, a new fish sighting, a Tortugas research cruise – as well as exciting projects 2007 has in store. The Field Survey season kicks off in a few short weeks with Joe's trip to Turks and Caicos. There are still two spots on my trip to Tortola April 14-21-it's a great group so far, so I hope you'll join us! Efforts to document and collect exotic species in both the Pacific and Atlantic are well under way and new interns bring their energy and enthusiasm to REEF offices on both coasts. Please remember to show your support for REEF by purchasing one of our hip new shirts or making a contribution through our secure website: www.reef.org. Best fishes in the coming year . . .

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- Leda Cunningham, REEF Executive Director

2. 2007 Field Survey Season-

Hi Everyone,

Our response to our upcoming Field Survey Season has been strong and I thank you for your continued interest in this REEF program! We still have room left on most of our trips for the upcoming season. As you revisit our schedule let me point out a couple of jewels in there that you may have overlooked first time-round. **Paul Humann's Discovery Tour** in Key Largo (July 7-14). This is your chance to learn from REEF co-founder and World-Renowned Marine Life Photographer & Author of the Reef Identification Series. July in Key Largo affords our members a very relaxed opportunity to learn from Paul's seminars and share time with him on the reefs so don't miss out on this trip.

Anguilla (Nov 10-17) is another one you may have missed and asked yourself, "where is this island?" No worries, I had to look it up myself when planning this one, it's part of the Lesser Antilles and located just due east of Puerto Rico and St. Marten. You can expect a relaxed, "Old Caribbean" pace and of course, some great diving. We have only 16 total fish surveys from Anguilla with just one expert survey so this trip will be a nice exploration opportunity and help us collect some much needed data from this island. On how to pronounce Anguilla, well...you'll just have to go there with us to answer that question.

For our cold water diving members, we have two great trips lined up this year – **Monterey Bay** (May 22-27) and the **San Juan Islands** (July 22-27). Both locations are ideal for non-diving companions and you can't beat the underwater scenery and marine life that you will see. These trips include marine life identification seminars on both fishes and invertebrates.

One final note on Field Surveys - We are currently looking into some options for trips in early 2008 as part of a REEF initiative to advertise our trips as early as possible and give our members plenty of time to plan and book a REEF trip. More on that as our plans shape up.

-Joe Cavanaugh, Director of Field Operations

2007 Field Survey Season at a glance

.(Space still available on all trips other than Exumas) <http://www.reef.org/fieldsurvey/>

- Grand Turk – Feb 17-24
- Tortola, British Virgin Islands – April 14-21
- Exumas – Sold Out – May 12-19
- **Monterey Bay** – May 22-27
- St. Vincent, Grenadines – June 9-16
- **Paul Humann's Key Largo Discovery Tour – July 7-14**
- **San Juan Islands** – July 22-27
- Kona Coast, Hawaii – Aug 4-11
- Woods Hole, Cape Cod – Sept 11-16
- Ned and Anna Deloach – Bonaire – Sept 22-29
- Utila Bay, Honduras – Oct 20-27
- **Anguilla – Nov 10-17**
- Cozumel – Dec 1-8



REEF members on Field Survey Trip to Cozumel December 2006

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3. **Meet the New REEF Interns in the Pacific Northwest and Florida**

Keys- Meet our outstanding, newly arrived Marine Conservation Interns, Breckie McCollum and Ben Frable (Pacific Northwest), Isla Turner and Jennifer Arakaki (Florida Keys). They will be with REEF through May.

Thanks to funding from the Russell Family Foundation, for the first time the REEF Pacific Office in Seattle, WA, has been able to support local University students to serve as interns. During the 2006/2007 academic year, we have two University of Washington students working on invasive species projects under the direction of REEF Director of Science, Christy Pattengill-Semmens. Breckie McCollum, a UW senior and active Pacific Northwest diver, is working on invasive tunicates, including developing training materials and conducting presentations about the threat that invasives pose to the Puget Sound. Ben Frable, a UW freshman and previous winner of a NOAA writing contest that enabled Ben to dive on the underwater Aquarius habitat in the Florida Keys, is developing database tools that will enable REEF to better manage and distribute our exotic species sightings.

From Isla - I graduated from the University of Miami, FL with a degree in Marine Affairs/Geography and am very excited to begin my career in the marine environment with REEF. I am a true conch, born and raised in the Florida Keys and for so many years I've been saying something needs to be done to help save our reefs but doing nothing. By working with this organization I finally feel like I'm on the right path and can help make that difference along with my fellow REEF members.

From Jennifer- I come from the west coast of the United States, Los Angeles, California. I just finished my undergraduate work at California State University at Monterey Bay in Earth Systems Science and Policy with a concentration in Marine and Coastal Ecology. So far working at REEF has been fun and all the staff members have been nice. I feel by working here I will learn a lot about the coral reef ecosystems and the types of fish occupy the habitat.

Our interns play a vital role in the day-to-day REEF HQ operations, staffing the phones, answering emails, processing merchandise orders, and greeting visitors. But they also assist staff with programmatic projects including: teaching REEF Fish ID classes; language interpretations of curricula; data crunching; processing new members; quality control on our fish survey scanforms; and diving on our Advanced Assessment Team (AAT) projects.

They are also often our face in the community, working with other organizations during their time off such as the National Park Service, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the Nature Conservancy, in addition to diving with our local Field Stations. It is fair to say that without the enthusiastic support of our interns, REEF could not function. They buffer the volume of communication we get daily with a member to staff ratio of 6,400 to 1, so that our staff can dedicate their time to working on the programs that you love and support.

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REEF HQ-Florida Keys- Interns Isla Turner, Jenny Arakaki

4. **REEF Divers Continue Work on Invasive Tunicates in the Puget Sound, Washington-**

-Christy Semmens, Director of Science

A team of REEF volunteers, organized by REEF instructor, Janna Nichols, conducted several dives around Maury Island in Puget Sound earlier this month to search for invasive tunicates. After a report came in about the suspected presence of the transparent tunicate, *Ciona savignyi*, Janna organized a team of 8 divers to search the area. The team, which consisted of REEF Advanced Assessment Team members, REEF's Director of Science Christy Pattengill-Semmens, and REEF Pacific Northwest Intern Breckie McCollum, did two (chilly! 43 degrees) reconnaissance dives. In addition to many native tunicates, a few *Ciona* individuals were found and subsequently collected under special permit from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), as part of an ongoing collaboration with REEF, the Washington Scuba Alliance, and WDFW to enable volunteer recreational divers to help document and control the spread of invasive tunicates in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to coordinated survey and collection efforts, REEF has incorporated three invasive tunicate species into our Pacific Northwest Invertebrate Monitoring Program, is coordinating presentations to area dive clubs and the general public, and producing training materials about the invasives. These activities are supported by a grant from the Russell Family Foundation. A special thanks goes to the staff and crew of [Bandito Charters](#) who supported the field efforts at Maury Island, and to the many Pacific AAT members who contribute their time (including those seen in the accompanying picture, as well as Tim Renz and Lowell Thomson).



One of the unwanted--an invasive transparent tunicate, *Ciona savignyi*, that was found and removed at Maury Island Barges on January 23. Photo by Janna Nichols.

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5. **REEF Recognized by EPA for work in Veracruz-**

-Lad Akins, Special Projects Manager

In December, REEF was recognized with a third place EPA Gulf Guardian Award in the newly established Bi-national Partnership category for its work with the Veracruz Marine Park, Veracruz, Mexico. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the 3rd National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration December 9-13, 2006.

REEF's work with the marine park, initiated by park director Elvira Carvajal, has included training in identification and survey techniques to more than 90 staff and volunteers from the marine park, dive operators, aquariums, beach patrol, students, other NGOs, and the public. To date over 400 surveys have been conducted by volunteers, which have helped the marine park document and its understanding of marine fish resources. In addition to the surveys conducted, two new species of fish were documented. REEF continues to work with the marine park to train local constituents and provide valuable resource data.

We'll keep you posted!

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6. **New REEF Field Station-**

Please welcome our latest addition to our Field Station Program, **Coastal Dive Center** in Hingham, Massachusetts <http://coastaldivecenter.com/>.



REEF AAT members, l. to r. - Phil Green, Rhoda Green, Valerie Lyttle, Janna Nichols, and Georgia Arrow, were divers who are actively involved in tunicate documentation and removal in Puget Sound



From left to right, pictured are Judy Ott, Gulf of Mexico Program Director Bryon REEF Executive Director Leda Cunningham, Veracruz Marine Park Director Elvira Carvajal, and EPA Region 4 Administrator Jimmy Palmer.



Many of our members may not realize that REEF also conducts fish surveys in the Northeastern U.S. Currently, our northeast program is built into our Tropical Western Atlantic survey program but we expect that this will change in due time as we increase our survey effort in the northeast in large part with the help of new Field Stations in the region. REEF is also running a Field Survey this year (Sept 11-16) to the Cape Cod and Gloucester areas <http://www.reef.org/fieldsurv>. For more information on becoming a REEF Field Station, please visit our website at <http://www.reef.org/member/fieldstations.htm>.

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7. **REEF Organizes Earth Day Lionfish Expedition.**

-By Lad Akins, Special Projects Manager



Did you know who ruled the sea? Well, things are changing and REEF is poised to help determine the outcome. In response to the first documented exotic marine fish invasion of the Western Atlantic, REEF is working with NOAA researchers and local dive operators to document the status of lionfish in the northern Bahamas. The species referred to as common or Red lionfish (*Pterois volitans*), has become well established along the US East coast, particularly the Carolinas and Georgia offshore habitats. Recent expansions of this establishment have also occurred in Bermuda and now the Bahamas.

To help better understand the reproductive status and potential of these fish, researchers at the Beaufort, NC NOAA lab are working with REEF to gather sightings information and collect samples from the warmer Atlantic regions. Bruce Purdy's dive operations (REEF Field Stations) are helping this effort by helping to organize two expeditions on his Blackbeard's Cruise vessels in the Northern Bahamas. One vessel will travel from Freeport to Nassau, and the other vessel Freeport to Andros and back, documenting lionfish occurrences and collecting samples for analysis by James Morris, lead reproductive researcher at the NOAA lab. Also taking part in the expeditions will be husbandry staff from the National aquarium in Washington DC and NOAA scientists. These projects will be a great way to explore the Bahamas reefs, interact with visiting scientists and help gather information on a growing problem in the Caribbean and US. For more information on the Blackbeards vessels and to reserve space on the projects, contact Blackbeard's Cruises at (800) 327-9600 or email them at ws@blackbeard-cruises.com. For project specifics and more information on lionfish and REEF's Exotic Species Program, contact Lad Akins at (305) 852-0030 x-2# or Lad@reef.org

[Click here... to view project brochure.](#)

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8. **New Fish Sightings by REEF Member -**

As always, REEF's fish survey program would not exist without our great volunteers. We receive emails and stories about new fish sightings on a regular basis and REEF members are continually adding information to our database about fish seen around the world.

This is a rare picture taken by REEF member Susan Porter of a crosshatch bass in Bonaire. The crosshatch bass can be seen in the Western Central Atlantic, West Indies, and Honduras. The environment that they are found in is demersal, usually near the bottom of a body of water.

Thanks to all our REEF members for their hard work and happy diving!

More information on the Crosshatch bass [click here!](#)



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9. **REEF Trips-AAT in Dry Tortugas**



Advanced Assessment Team (AAT) Trip to the Dry Tortugas in December 2006

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10. **REEF Parts - Things To Know** - Here are a few notes and news bits we'd like you to know about:

- **New REEF Apparel!!!:** Check out our website for new REEF gear. Sweatshirts, polos, t-shirts, bags and more can be found at cafepress.com/reefstore.
- **Going on a trip?** order Scan forms, underwater survey paper, and other items at the [REEF online store](#)

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See You Next Month!

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