



REEF-in-Brief

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

July 2006

1. **Welcome** - Hi All. I hope everyone's summer is going swimmingly (and diving-ly!) Things are busy as always here at REEF HQ - we've welcomed new Executive Director, Leda Cunningham, and we are excited to have her enthusiasm, ideas, and fresh coats of paint around the office!

Be sure to check-in next month when, amongst other great pieces of (e-)news, we announce our 2006 REEF Volunteer of the Year Award. *Best Fishes* - Bryan Dias, REEF Director of Outreach & Education

2. **Welcome to REEF's New Executive Director** - Leda Cunningham rejoins REEF as Executive Director. Most recently, Leda was in Washington DC completing her Masters and working for the National Environmental Trust. She is looking forward to working with REEF's many talented staff, volunteers, and members to strengthen REEF's citizen science programs and establish REEF as the "do something" organization within the marine conservation community.

Leda Cunningham (at right), has re joined REEF as Executive Director. We are pleased to have her excellent experience and fresh ideas onboard.

3. **Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Monitoring on the "Nancy Foster"** - In May and June of this year, three Advanced Assessment Team (AAT) members were able to take part in REEF's fish survey work for the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS), living and working from the 187' NOAA research ship Nancy Foster. The unique opportunity to not only dive in one of our most treasured national marine sanctuaries, but also to live as a research scientist aboard a NOAA research vessel for 8 days was a special treat.

Brenda Hitt, Lillian Kenney and Sarah Goldman took part in the project which continued REEF's survey efforts in the GRNMS for the 5th straight year. The team visited 21 sites, some of which were new to the REEF data set (and were christened with many dubious names such as Paul's Pancreatic Reef, Will's Liver and The Claw) documenting 80 different species along the way. Both REEF roving diver surveys and a stationery count method were employed in gathering complete species lists as well as size class data from the siltstone ledges of the sanctuary. Interesting sightings during the project included northern searobin, shortnose batfish, black margate, saddled blenny, and a new record for the GRNMS, bighead searobin. The data collected during REEF's annual projects at GRNMS are being used to help formulate plans for a research only area in the sanctuary as well as monitor any changes taking place in the fish assemblages in the GRNMS.

For more info on Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary visit <http://www.graysreef.noaa.gov/>

For data from the GRNMS project, visit: <http://www.placeholder.com> or contact Lad Akins

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*REEF's Gray's Reef NMS 2006
Advanced Assessment Team,
(above, from left) Sarah
Goldman, Brenda Hitt &
Lillian Kenney*

at Lad@reef.org.

4. **Joe's REEF Fish ID Survey Tip of the Month** - "The Bottom Line on Bottom Time:" An integral part of the REEF dive survey is estimating your bottom time. Our survey methodology relies on bottom time to estimate abundances since we are not surveying transects. The Roving Diver Technique (RDT) allows us the opportunity to survey a greater area during a single dive for our surveys than other methods and that, for one thing, makes for a much more interesting dive.

But one thing I have noticed with many of the surveys processed each month is that the total dive time, rather than the time actually spent surveying, is used for "bottom time" on the survey form. For instance, if a REEF diver surveys a deep site like the Spiegel Grove wreck at 100 ft., his/her survey time should be between 25-30 min. But I often see bottom times of 45 minutes and up on deep dives, clearly too long a bottom time for the Spiegel wreck. Bottom time should equal the time spent surveying +/- a couple of minutes for seeing things in the water column. Most often I will not be able to tell if you are overestimating bottom time since I will not know your dive profile, you could be diving a wall and pop down briefly to 100' and then have a leisurely shallow profile for 40 min. afterwards, for example.

So the bottom line on bottom time is think, "bottom time = survey time" and when in doubt underestimate rather than overestimate. When you do that you will have the same margin of error for all your surveys, but that could be a whole other topic, "exaggerators vs. underestimators" for fish abundance, for instance. Otherwise, keep up the great work everyone. We have heaps of surveys coming in each month and the quality of your surveys keeps improving. See you next month - Joe Cavanaugh, REEF Field Operations Coordinator

5. **Three-Year Biscayne National Park Monitoring To Start in September** - Following the very successful two-year inventory project that REEF will finish up this fall, the National Park Service has contracted REEF to conduct a three year monitoring project at key sites within the Biscayne National Park. The inventory project that has added more than 50 new species to the park's lists, laid the groundwork for the monitoring effort which will compliment a separate project being conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The new monitoring project will focus on sites along the 60' depth boundary of the park as well as shallow near-shore patch reefs. Data gathered during both winter and summer seasons will be used to look at changes in the fish community structure and help determine what survey frequency will be most advantageous to better understand park resources. The information will also be used in a National Marine Fisheries study that is revisiting 7 sites in the park studied by Tilmont in the 1970's. A National Park Service goal in initiating this effort is to use the project as a model for implementation in other National Parks with marine fish components.

For more information on the Biscayne National Park visit <http://www.nps.gov/bisc/>

For more information on REEF's database for the Park, visit: <http://www.reef.org/cgi-bin/georep.pl?region=TWA&geogr=3302> or contact Lad Akins at Lad@reef.org.

6. **REEF Events** - Here are some great things to get involved in with a few of our partners:

- **REEF Fish ID Training in San Diego** - On September 9th, San Diego Oceans Foundation will be hosting a REEF Fish ID training. The class is open to snorkelers and divers of all levels and ages. By the end of the training session you will be able to identify local marine fish, collect information on populations, and report it to REEF for species and abundance tracking. The information will then be used by the National Marine Sanctuary Program, National Marine Fisheries Service, and The Nature Conservancy, along with others. For every 6 surveys completed, participants will



REEF's 2006 Lower Florida Keys Advanced Assessment Team (above). This group of expert surveyors has done another great job completing our annual monitoring effort of the area for the year.



Close-up of a Yellowface Pikeblenny found in Biscayne National Park this year. Photo courtesy of REEF Member, Carol Grant.

earn a FREE dive trip on the Lois Ann (maximum of 5). If you are interested in attending, please RSVP by emailing courtney@sdoceas.org or by calling (619) 523-1903.

- **REEF Week with Deep Blue Utila** - During the week of October 21st-28th, [Deep Blue Utila](#) (a REEF Field Station) is hosting their "REEF Week." They will be bringing super REEF volunteer, Judie Clee, down from Bermuda to give nightly "critter" talks on REEF Fish ID, behavior, and lots of other interesting topics. This is a great opportunity to learn and have fun in a relaxed, but very nice environment. Utila boasts some of the best diving in the Caribbean (be sure to check out the north side walls - perhaps the best in the region!) For more information or to make a reservation for this all inclusive trip, please contact owner, Steve Fox, at waves2222@aol.com.
- **Centro Ecologico Akumal (CEA)** - A REEF Non-Profit/Academic Field Station - located in Akumal, Mexico on the Yucatan Peninsula, is looking for volunteers. In response to environmental degradation and the demands of the community, CEA is launching a new Marine and Coastal Protection Program that can essentially be divided into two main components: a scientific monitoring project and an environmental education project. CEA is currently recruiting volunteers to join our team and help with both components of the program. For more information, please go to CEA's website www.ceakumal.org or contact Lucy Gallagher at marine@ceakumal.org for a volunteer pack.

Contribute Now

Please consider supporting REEF and the critical work we do by donating generously.

See You Next Month!

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

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