



REEF-in-Brief

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

June 2006

1. **Welcome** - Happy summer everyone. I hope this edition of "REEF-in-Brief" finds you all well. As always, there is a lot going on at REEF this time of year - lots of projects, trips, and, of course, the Great Annual Fish Count (GAFC). We hope to see you out in the water with survey slate in hand!

- Best Fishes - Bryan Dias, REEF Director of Outreach & Education

2. **REEF Welcomes New Board of Trustees Member** - Andy Dehart, joins the REEF Board of Trustees following a unanimous vote in March. Andy is the General Manager of the National Aquarium in Washington DC and a long-time REEF expert surveyor.

Andy Dehart began his career in public aquariums at the National Aquarium in Baltimore in 1989 while still in high school. Andy left for Omaha, Nebraska to help build and open the Kingdom of the Seas Aquarium at the Henry Doorly Zoo, and returned to the National Aquarium in Baltimore as a senior aquarist and then as the Assistant Curator of Fishes, Animal Care Center. He is now the general manager of the National Aquarium in Washington, DC and oversees the husbandry, animal health, conservation, and facilities operations with the help of an excellent staff of knowledgeable and talented biologists and chemists.

Andy earned a B.S. in Biology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His lifelong passion has been sharks and rays, and he has worked with them for nearly eighteen years. A particular specialty is the tiger shark. He has authored two chapters for The Elasmobranch Husbandry Manual, a resource documenting how to keep sharks and rays in captivity.

Andy is an avid SCUBA diver and a divemaster. He has served on the REEF Advanced Assessment Team since 2000 and has conducted surveys throughout the Caribbean, the Northeast Atlantic, Hawaii and American Samoa. Andy resides in Maryland with his wife, Jessica, who is also a REEF Expert Surveyor.

3. **The 15th Great Annual Fish Count (GAFC)** - The premier marine conservation citizen science event is upon us! The big month is July when divers and snorkelers in numerous locations, both within the US and internationally, get out to learn REEF Fish ID and conduct surveys throughout our regions. This is a great opportunity to take a free REEF Fish ID class and also connect with other individuals as well as groups, such as local dive operators and non-profit organizations, interested in doing the same thing.

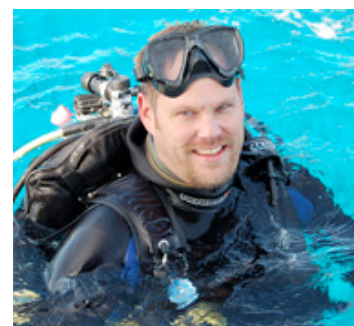
Numerous activities have been scheduled and still more are being added. Event listings and schedules can be seen at:

<http://www.fishcount.org/events/calendar.html>

Each year the GAFC generates approximately 2,000 surveys in the month of July alone and

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Andy Dehart (above), has joined the REEF Board of Trustees. Andy brings tremendous professional experience and a lot of familiarity with REEF along with him.



boasts the involvement of hundreds of surveyors. Terrific volunteers organize local events that often include REEF Fish ID classes (free), survey dive/snorkel events, and even social activities such as barbecues. It's a great way to make an active contribution to marine conservation as well as to get involved in REEF. Often, these organized events provide an ideal setting for new surveyors to learn and gain confidence from others with more experience. The GAFC is representative of what we do at REEF year-round - engage volunteer divers and snorkelers to collect critical, valid, and cost-effective data used by marine resource managers, researchers and others who would normally not be able to acquire this information due to cost and logistical restraints with which they are often faced.

We hope you get involved!

<http://www.fishcount.org>

4. **Keeping Tabs on the Least Wanted Species** - REEF is playing a pivotal role in assessing and addressing exotic/invasive species in our marine waters. Recent collaborations with NOAA's Marine Fisheries Lab in North Carolina and the Washington State Sea Grant Program are providing valuable information and education on non-native lionfish in the Caribbean and invasive tunicates in the Pacific Northwest.

REEF's exotic species program began in 1996 following reports by REEF volunteers of Indo-Pacific batfish off a Florida reef. Since then, the program has expanded to include an educational component, a web-based sightings report form, two successful collection efforts of non-native species, a scientific publication and collaborative efforts on both coasts of the US. In response to regarding the ever-increasing invasion of the Indo-Pacific lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) along the east coast of the US and throughout the Bahamas and Bermuda, REEF will be collaborating with NOAA researchers in Beaufort, NC, to collect sightings and behavior data as well as samples of specimens to help determine genetics, population dynamics and reproductive capacity of the fish. Lionfish have now been reported from as far north as New York (juveniles) and as far south as Long Island in the Bahamas. These fish have become alarmingly abundant at certain sites, as illustrated by a recent report from REEF Advanced Assessment Team member Tracy Harris of 11 fish on one site in the Bahamas. Efforts are underway to not only collect samples for laboratory analysis but to initiate plans for removal in certain areas.

Similarly, REEF has forged a new partnership with agencies and scientists in the Pacific Northwest to help document and potentially control the spread of a less charismatic, but arguably even more threatening, group of invasives - tunicates. With funding from the Russell Family Foundation, REEF will be working with Washington Sea Grant and other members of the Washington State Tunicate Response Advisory Committee to coordinate outreach and education, as well as targeted monitoring, on three invasive tunicate species (*Didemnum* sp. A, *Styela clava*, and *Ciona savignyi*) that have been infesting local marinas and harbors in the Puget Sound area. Funding will support a Marine Conservation Intern, based at REEF's Pacific Office in Seattle, to conduct seminars to divers and the public about the tunicates and other invasive species as well as work with local dive groups to monitor the spread and take part in removal projects.

If you are interested in helping with collection efforts of the lionfish contact Lad Akins at Lad@reef.org To volunteer for Pacific Northwest tunicate projects, contact Christy Semmens at Christy@reef.org. To find out more about REEF's Exotic Species program, visit <http://www.reef.org/exotic>.

5. **Biscayne Project - Biscayne Inventory Surveys** - REEF Advanced Assessment Team (AAT) members continue to add to the species list for Florida's Biscayne National Park

REEF's 15th Great Annual Fish Count is upon us! Get involved with the premier marine conservation citizen science event and see what the fun is all about! Visit the [GAFC website](#) for more information.

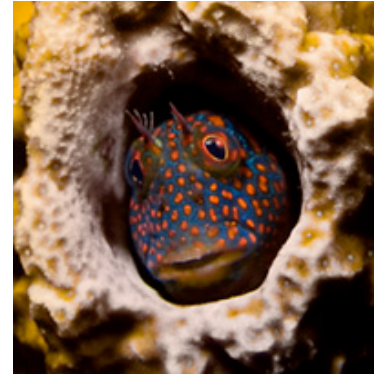


The Lionfish (above), an Indo-Pacific native, has become a problem of major concern. This exotic/invasive is plaguing much of the US eastern seaboard, the Bahamas, and Bermuda. REEF is playing a key role in addressing this issue for the Lionfish as well as other marine exotic/invasives.
Photo by: Joe Froelich



(BNP) during the 3rd of 4 week-long surveys. The total REEF list for BNP is now up to 263 species with 58 of them being new additions to the park's list.

As part of a 2-year project to inventory the fish species in Biscayne National Park, REEF is using expert volunteers to conduct 4 separate census efforts throughout the park. So far three of the efforts have been completed with the final effort to take place in September of this year. Already, the REEF project has resulted in an 18% increase to the Park's species list. Fifty eight of the now 385 documented species have come solely from the REEF effort. Each effort, conducted over 5 days, has explored the range of habitat types in the park including non-traditional dive areas such as mangrove creeks, grass flats, sandy bottoms and near shore patch reefs. More than 20 REEF experts have taken part in the project so far. More information on this project will be added to the REEF website soon.



A Tessellated Blenny found on a tower at BNP (above - photo by: Carol Grant.) A Marbled Blenny, a rare sighting, that is found in seagrass beds and shallow reefs (far left - photo by: Peter Leahy.) Some of REEF's AAT BNP Project Team (left.)



6. **New Scanforms for the West Coast and Tropical Eastern Pacific Regions and Upcoming Program Updates** - If you are a REEF surveyor in our Pacific Ocean regions (PAC and TEP), you will notice a new look to the scanforms next time you conduct a survey. The changes include common name updates following the most recent American Fisheries Society Names List and a new invertebrate and algae monitoring program for California. These revisions are part of REEF's ongoing commitment to improving and expanding our citizen science program. Updates and new tools on the horizon include mapping and spatial query options through our online data interface and online data entry for all of our regions (currently just in the Caribbean/Florida - TWA region) - stay tuned!



7. **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 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 waves222@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.

- ***The 15th Great Annual Fish Count is underway!*** Events are being added regularly. Check the GAFC website (www.fishcount.org) for more information and events. If you don't see an event in your area, check back - more events are still being added.

Contribute Now

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

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

