



REEF-in-Brief

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

March 2005

1. **Welcome to REEF-in-Brief!** The new monthly e-newsletter from the Reef Environmental Education Foundation. The idea is to keep you informed and up-to-date on all the activities, programs, and news happening here at REEF each month. With each edition, you'll find news on current projects, things you can get involved in, and a host of other interesting entries.

As with membership in REEF, receiving REEF-in-Brief is free! So, please feel free to pass this on to your friends and let them know they can sign up to receive this each month delivered right to their email inbox. We hope you find it interesting, informative, and fun. So, read on and find out what REEF is up to these days and get involved!

- Bryan Dias, REEF Director of Outreach & Education

2. **New Field Station - New Concept!** - REEF is in the process of doing many things with its successful and long-standing Field Station Program. Since the earliest days of the organization, tremendous support has come from dive operators, organizations, and even dedicated individuals who have become REEF Field Stations. Field Stations act as centers of outreach for REEF, teaching regular Fish ID courses, providing information, and participating in activities and programs such as the [Great Annual Fish Count](#).

We are creating new ways to better support and work with our Field Stations in order to continue the great success we've had with these incredibly valuable and important partners. One of the exciting things we have put together is a new type of Field Station standing for non-profit organizations and academic institutions. These groups often provide valuable long-term support and involvement to REEF in areas that are in critical need of successful marine conservation efforts. Because these organizations often operate on small budgets, the NAFS program allows for their membership to be provided via sponsorship.

We are pleased to announce our first Non-Profit/Academic Field Station (NAFS) as part of this new program - Mundo Arrecife in San Jose, Costa Rica. This dedicated non-profit works for marine conservation on both sides of the country's coast, but has a strong emphasis on the Pacific side. They are engaged in numerous activities involving REEF, including teaching Fish ID to local groups and dive shop staffs and working to recruit new REEF members and Field Stations in Costa Rica. Their NAFS membership has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of [Amy Slate's Amoray Dive Resort](#) in Key Largo, FL. Amoray Dive Resort has been a long-time REEF Field Station and overall supporter of the organization. We thank both Amoray Dive Resort and Mundo Arrecife for pioneering this new and exciting Field Station concept!

If you are interested in finding out more about this program, becoming a REEF NAFS, or would like to find out how you can support the program, please drop Bryan Dias, REEF's Director of Outreach & Education a line at bryan@reef.org. More on the program and listings of our REEF Field Stations can be found at:

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Mundo Arrecife, REEF's first Non-Profit/Academic Field Station (NAFS), works to educate Costa Rican school children about marine conservation. Their dedicated efforts in Costa Rica continue to be effective in introducing a strong REEF program to the country.

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

- Bryan Dias, REEF Director of Outreach & Education

3. **Field Station of the Month** - A regular feature that will appear in REEF-in-Brief is the "Field Station of the Month." Here, we will highlight one of the great Field Stations from our growing list, which now stands at more than 70 located throughout REEF's survey regions. We hope that you will show your support to REEF's Field Stations - these great dive operators and organizations have shown their tremendous support to marine conservation.

This edition's Field Station of the Month is close to home - "It's A Dive" in Key Largo, FL. It's A Dive has been a REEF Field Station since early 2002. However, one of the co-owners of the shop, John Stuart, and his family have been active REEF supporters since 1997. When John bought into the shop in 2001, he brought his belief in marine conservation and his support for REEF with it.

It's A Dive supports the organization in numerous ways. They have been very generous by allowing the young people who participate in the REEF Marine Conservation Internship Program to dive for free as they pursue their education on Fish ID and enhance their dive skills. They have also been solid supporters of our Dive-Into-Earth-Day events and the Great Annual Fish Count. It's A Dive was also given an "A+" in the most recent "Best of the Florida Keys Reader Ratings" in Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine.

If you are planning a dive trip to the Florida Keys, be sure to check out It's A Dive! Their website is - <http://www.itsadive.com>

- Bryan Dias, REEF Director of Outreach & Education

4. **The Ultimate Fish Resource For Your PC** - If you want a handy resource for Fish ID learning and reference for your computer, check out the 3rd edition of the ReefNet "Fishes of the Caribbean and Adjacent Waters." It comes in either a premium DVD version or a standard CD-ROM version. There are tons of photos, video clips and diagrams. In addition, the program contains numerous learning and other tools, such as ID quizzes to improve your knowledge and a "presentation designer" that allow you to make your own slide and video shows. Another great feature allows you to use the program's search engine to identify a fish species based on description information you provide.

The ReefNet program has been created by the Wilk family, long-time REEF supporters. Last year they conducted their yearly Great Annual Fish Count trip to San Andres, Colombia. Read about [their trip here](#). Please visit REEF's online store at www.reef.org for "Fishes of the Caribbean and Adjacent Waters" and other great items. You can also visit the ReefNet website at: <http://www.reefneta.ca>

5. **Field Operations Coordinator Pushes REEF Over 80,000** - Thanks for the many warm welcomes from REEF members! I am enjoying Key Largo and making my way up the precipitous or should I say "Gorgonian" learning curve of fish identification and slowly extricating myself from the mountain of scanforms that came into REEF HQ last year. I thank you all for your patience as many of you know our survey count was dead in the water for awhile as I learned the ins and outs of processing your scanforms and running quality controls on your data. Quite a few of you have heard from me over the past months and everyone has been very helpful responding to my queries.

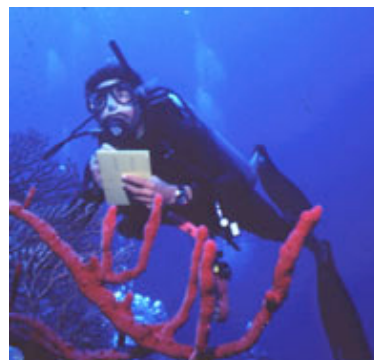
You may have also noticed that our Surveys to Date number has breached 80,000



REEF is proud to name Key Largo's "It's A Dive" as our inaugural REEF Field Station of the Month. It's A Dive is an outstanding supporter of the organization and continues to make a terrific contribution by enabling our REEF Marine Conservation Interns to dive and get out and learn their fish. We thank them for their involvement. Pay them a visit the next time you are in Key Largo.



ReefNet's terrific 3rd Edition of "Fishes of the Caribbean" is a great learning resource. It's available at [REEF's online store](#).



surveys! That's quite an achievement and you should be proud of your contributions to the largest fish census database worldwide. When I arrived from Cape Cod we had 67,924 surveys logged. But what's in a number anyway? Carl Sagan swore he never said "billions and billions" but that it was Johnny Carson's caricature on the Tonight Show that popularized the expression. We'll probably never have a billion surveys BUT 80,000 is definitely a number to boast so I applaud all your efforts in and out of the water, surveying, learning your fish, and filling out the scanforms. I am looking forward to meeting many of our members over the upcoming year in the water on Field Surveys and Advanced Assessments. Keep up the great work!

- Joseph Cavanaugh, REEF Field Operations Coordinator



Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our members, REEF has reached a significant milestone - 80,000 surveys! This is the largest living fish survey database in the world and each survey adds to the value of this critical information.

6. **Spawning, Century Dives and Hurricanes: REEF Field Surveys** - In addition to conducting surveys on their own, Field Surveys, weeklong dive trips organized by REEF, are another way that volunteers can get involved in the REEF Fish Survey Project. These trips feature daily seminars on fish identification and other topics and are a great way to either be introduced to the world of REEF surveying or to hone your skills as an experienced naturalist. Participants often comment that their favorite part of a Field Survey is spending the week diving and learning with a group of like-minded individuals. REEF coordinates about a dozen trips throughout our project regions each year. In addition to the regular Field Surveys, we also offer a few special trips that focus on general topics. These include "REEF Discovery Tours," led by organization co-founder Paul Humann, which is an introduction to the diversity of life found on Caribbean coral reefs and the "REEF Behavior Tours," led by REEF's other founder Ned DeLoach. New in 2004, the Behavior Tour focused on marine life behavior, including reproduction, feeding and cleaning.

Here is a bit about last year's "REEF Behavior Tour" to give you an idea of what these special trips are all about:

It was an amazing week despite the trouble Hurricane Frances caused for many getting to the island and then being brushed by Hurricane Ivan mid-week (this was especially notable because this was the first hurricane Bonaire had seen in 130 years!). Each day, Ned presented a short slide and video show covering a variety of behavior topics. Because the trip coincided with the annual mass coral spawning, we were fortunate to also discuss and witness this spectacular underwater event. In addition to spawning brain and star corals, we found spawning sea rods (a type of soft coral) and went out at dusk to see the mating ritual of hamlets. These smaller seabass, unlike their larger grouper cousins who gather in large groups each winter, have mating pairs who join together each night, switching sexes from male to female and back again during multiple reproductive bouts.

In addition to learning and watching for interesting creature behaviors, many in the group conducted REEF fish surveys during each dive. Bonaire is a fishwatcher's paradise, with some of the most species-rich sites in REEF's database. It is entirely possible for an experienced REEF surveyor to record over 100 species on almost every dive here.

We hope you will join us soon on a 2005 Field Survey. We still have openings on many trips - including Costa Rica, Utila, the Kona Coast in Hawaii, and Culebra in Puerto Rico. For more information on REEF Field Surveys, visit:

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

- Christy Pattengill-Semmens, Ph.D. REEF Scientific Coordinator



Participants in REEF's 2004 "Behavior Tour Field Survey" in Bonaire. On Field Surveys, REEF members have the opportunity to not only visit a terrific dive destination and get in the water for fun, they also get involved in marine conservation by conducting REEF Fish ID surveys, attending seminars, and meeting others with similar interests. This is a great way to take a "volunteer vacation." One you won't soon forget! If you are interested in learning more about REEF's 2005 Field Survey schedule, [please visit our website.](#)

7. **Project Update - Gray's Reef** - Not many divers and even fewer non-divers know that there is an area off the coast of Georgia that harbors extensive marine life and is

protected as one of our nation's 13 National Marine Sanctuaries. Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) may not hold the greatest visibility or largest diversity in the REEF database, but due to the efforts of REEF volunteers and the Advanced Assessment Team, it is becoming more known and understood as an important site along the Atlantic coast.

For ten days in August, the REEF team surveyed 14 sites inside and outside of the GRNMS. Both regular REEF species and abundance surveys as well as a new size data survey were conducted resulting in 174 survey dives (including 292 size data samples). The group documented 24 species new to the GRNMS data set and gathered important size data on targeted species such as grouper and snapper. This data will be analyzed and used by the Sanctuary to help determine the status of and the effects of management strategies on these targeted species.

Notable finds during the project included numerous goliath grouper, large scamp and gag groupers, as well as new sightings of whitenose pipefish, bluespotted searobins, atlantic midshipman, guaguanche and others.

We look forward to returning this June to continue gathering baseline data. This important information will help determine the effects of future management actions.

For more information on the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary visit <http://www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov/> or to see a list of species recorded in Gray's Reef visit <http://www.reef.org/cgi-bin/georep.pl?region=TWA&geogr=9302>

- Lad Akins, REEF Executive Director



A "scad ledge" at Gray's Reef from last October's survey work. These unique hard-bottom ledges and fish assemblages characterize much of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

See You Next Month!

To signup or to stop receiving this please visit our "REEF-in-Brief" page at:

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

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



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