Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program

WORD ON THE REEF

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Volunteers learn how to identify coral bleaching

Members are briefed on key indicators of coral bleaching before getting into teams at Piti Bay

If you've been to the beach lately, you may have noticed the water is hotter than usual. You're not the only one that noticed! Our corals are feeling the heat and as a result began to bleach. What is coral bleaching? Coral bleaching occurs when corals get stressed from high water temperatures combined with intense sunlight and release their zooxanthellae, the symbiotic algae that supply their nutritional needs. When corals bleach, they lose their beautiful color and turn white. In August, GCCRMP members attended our Coral Bleaching Training. During the snorkel in Piti, members learned how to identify coral bleaching on the reef flats. Using cameras and GPS, the teams documented which species were bleaching and where corals were bleaching.

Photo taken by volunteer to document coral bleaching in Piti Bay

Information on coral bleaching collected by community members can help reef managers track bleaching and respond quickly to monitor sensitive areas. Scientists also need help identifying reefs that aren't bleaching. Why? So managers can continue to protect our strong, resilient reefs. After all, resilient corals can help recover Guam's coral reefs if a massive bleaching event occurs.

Science Sunday a major success

In coordination with National Park Service, GCCRMP hosted the first Science Sunday on Sunday, September 15, 2013 at the T. Stell Newman Visitor Center. Science Sunday features local scientists and their work to understand and protect Guam's coral reefs. Roxanna Miller, marine biologist for the Guam Coastal Management Program, was our first guest speaker for Science Sunday. Miller's talk with the community focused on coral bleaching and coral disease. She discussed how weather, marine conditions and other impacts can cause coral bleaching and make corals more susceptible to disease. Miller also shared information with the community on how they can help monitor coral bleaching on Guam.

Roxanna Miller discussing coral bleaching with Science Sunday audience at the T. Stell Newman Visitor Center

Over 50 community members attended the first Science Sunday. Audience members included students and teachers from various high schools, University of Guam, and Guam Community College, divers, snorkelers, and families who simply wanted to learn more about Guam's reefs. Community attendees asked insightful questions about how to visually identify coral bleaching and disease and possible solutions scientists have used to limit the spread of coral bleaching. Miller showed photos that illustrated the difference between a dead coral and a bleached coral as practice for the audience. Our next Science Sunday will be November 17, 2013. Stay updated by joining our emailing list, following us on Facebook, or visiting our website!

WANTED: Coral Bleaching Photos

It's **HOT** on Guam's reefs this summer and the corals are bleaching.

Help Guam's marine biologists document this event – Send your photos of bleached hard corals, soft corals, fire corals, anemones, or giant clams to:

GuamCoralWatch@gmail.com

Be sure to include a note about the **Location**, **Depth**, and **Date Taken**.

Umatac Coral Reef Ambassadors to begin monitoring Umatac and Cetti Bay

UCRA and GCCRMP staff group photo before snorkeling in Umatac Bay

The Umatac Coral Reef Ambassadors (UCRA) are the newest members to join the Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program. Although there are over 200 GCCRMP members, UCRA is the first community group to focus efforts on their village bays of Umatac Bay and Cetti Bay. Ambassadors learned about coral reef ecology and the threats challenging Guam's reefs, specifically in southern Guam. Then Ambassadors went snorkeling in Umatac Bay and documented key reef features and various species of corals, algae, and marine critters that call Umatac Bay "home." During another session, Ambassadors viewed underwater photos, used GPS to map important features, such as the river mouth, and discussed marine species they saw in Umatac Bay. They also learned monitoring survey methods that will help them track the health of their adopted bays. GCCRMP will continue to support UCRA's data collection. If other groups are interested in "adopting a bay" in their village, contact us and share your ideas for protecting your reef!

Ambassadors review survey methods on land before heading out to the water

Si Yu'os Ma'åse to our Partners!

and Humatak Community Foundation, Inc.

MEMBER FEATURE: Noah Martin

Meet Noah! She and her brother, Thaddeus, have been GCCRMP volunteers since our very first training in July 2012. It's no wonder that her favorite activity in the water is snorkeling.

"It's cool to see and discover the different things that are in the ocean," said Noah of her favorite water activity. A true steward of Guam's coral reefs, Noah commented, "it's important for the community to help our coral reefs because the coral reefs help us in different ways by providing shelter and food for sea creatures or protecting us from natural disasters, like tsunamis."

UPCOMING EVENTS

Classroom Training
November 6, 2013 from 4:00 – 6:00 PM
NOAA Fisheries Office, Tamuning

In-Water Training
November 9, 2013 from 9:00 – 11:00 AM
Tepungan Beach Park, Piti

Science Sunday
November 17, 2013 at 2:00 PM
T. Stell Newman Visitor Center

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