



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND | PROJECT FACTSHEET

MARCH 2011

In 2007 Reef Check Australia (RCA) established an office South East Queensland (SEQ). This program has flourished taking on 4 part time project officers in 2010 to assist with the promotion and management of RCA. The SEQ region now has almost 30 monitoring sites between the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. Data from these sites contributes valuable knowledge about coral habitat health in the SEQ region, an area faced with a history of water quality issues and a rapidly growing population. RCA is collecting high-quality data across the artificial and fringing reefs between the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, including sites within the important Ramsar wetlands of Moreton Bay. The data collected provides important coral health status and trend information on high priority hotspot sites to natural resource managers and local dive operators in the region.

More than monitoring

Our SEQ branch isn't just working to empower divers to protect coral resources in the region; RCA is also working help people get involved in the protection of reef resources above the water. A broad-scale market research survey in the SEQ area in 2009 highlighted a lack of awareness about local coral habitats, but a willingness to get involved. In response to this survey RCA has developed brochures, stickers and a community service announcement now sowing on the local Brisbane City Cats to raise awareness of RCA and the reefs around SEQ. As part of a sustainable behaviour campaign RCA has developed reusable branded coffee cups, reusable bags and reminder door-hangers and stickers to prompt and encourage sustainable behaviour. Please visit our Seastore for some products that might help YOU be a little more sustainable in your everyday life!



Island Instruction



In September and December 2010 we ran intensive training courses on North Stradbroke Island. Course participants undertook three days of Reef Check training, including six eye-opening dives at Shag Rock. This course has come about thanks to a partnership with University of Queensland's UniDive, who assisted with course logistics. Volunteers will learn reef ecology, survey protocol, identification expertise, data collection techniques and buoyancy skills. Our 29 new volunteers join the ever-growing team of divers in South East Queensland and have already jumped right into surveys!

Reef Check Australia's mission is to promote healthy local coral reefs through scientific research, community education and marine conservation.



Scientific significance

This project is providing valuable information where there is currently a serious data gap, as the condition of the rocky reefs in SEQ is widely unknown. Water quality pollution, over harvesting and habitat destruction from continued urban development are serious issues within the region. It is important to monitor the health of these reefs to ensure that impacts can be identified and mitigated. Through the provision of status and trends information to local natural resource managers, systems can be developed to mitigate identified threats and pressures, which can help to

maintain and enhance biodiversity through improved ecosystem resilience.

Showing off our stuff

The Reef Check Australia Database, launched in October 2009, features summary data for all of our 137 Queensland research sites. Please visit <http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/data.html> to find out more about your favorite reefs. If you would like to view additional data details, please contact us about our Data User Agreement.

In recognition of the value of Reef Check Australia's data, discussions for data-sharing are underway with Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, Department of Environmental Resource Management, South East Queensland Catchments Ltd, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Gold Coast City Council and CoralWatch. We are actively looking to produce useful data applications with the unique monitoring data being collected on SEQ coral habitats.

Powerful partnerships

In an exciting new development for 2011, RCA is partnering with Tourism Queensland and Ben Southall to participate in The Best Expedition in the World. As part of this RCA is launching our Adopt a Reef Corporate Giving Program where private corporations can Adopt a Reef and support the launching of *ReefSearch*, a new program to engage more people in reef health monitoring.

The RCA SEQ program has received generous funding from the Australian Government's CoastCare for ongoing operations in 2009/10. The SEQ project was also awarded funding from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to support additional volunteer training as well as the monitoring of local sites.

SEQ Catchments itself provided substantial seed funding to help establish the project in 2007 and continues to support RCA today by providing the SEQ office with discounted office space. We would also like to acknowledge a generous contribution from the Max Fabre Foundation, funding that helps our efforts reach even further.

The SEQ program is hugely reliant on the in-kind support of a number of boat operators by way of reduced rate berths space for training and surveys. Most importantly, the SEQ program is only possible thanks to the commitment of our community volunteers generously donating their time to complete surveys. Our success in South East Queensland would also not be possible without successful partnerships, data sharing and collaborations with the following organisations:

- Dive Evolution
- Dive Noosa
- Dive World
- Diving the Gold Coast
- Nautilus Scuba Centre
- Palm Beach Dive
- Pro Dive Brisbane
- Point Lookout Scuba Dive Charters
- Reality Cruises
- Scuba World
- Sun Reef
- University of Queensland
- Australian Commonwealth Scientific & Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- Australian Marine Conservation Society
- CoralWatch
- Department of Environmental Resource Management
- Gold Coast City Council
- Noosa Integrated Catchment Association (NICA)
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- Sea World
- SEQ Catchments Ltd
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- University of the Sunshine Coast