

Reef Check Australia Photography Competition: “What do coral reefs mean to you?” Winners Announced

Pictures speak a thousand words: Reef Check Australia and Project AWARE are pleased to announce the winners for the [International Year of the Reef 2008](#) photography competition. The goal of the competition was to showcase the Australian public's 'vision' of the value of our coral reefs and the threats that they currently face.

Reef Check Australia Photography Winners and Runners Up

The judges were impressed by the high standard of entries to this year's competition. The competition received a record 139 entries and several hundred votes were cast online at the Reef Check website www.reefcheckaustralia.org. All the category winners will receive 1 pair of Maui Jim sunglasses to the value of \$219.95 and the overall winner will receive a fantastic 6 day, 6 night liveaboard trip to the Ribbon Reefs and Osprey Reef donated by Undersea Explorer.

Reef Check Australia Photographer of the Year 2008

Overall Winner, Steve Rosenberg: Steve was selected as the Overall Winner based on his compelling and highly original photograph entitled 'Screamer'. This powerful image of a loggerhead turtle, mouth agape in a seeming expression of horror, perfectly captures this well-loved icon of coral reefs, at the same time reminding us that the existence of this remarkable creature is at risk. All seven species of marine turtles are considered endangered or threatened, as they are particularly vulnerable to rising marine debris such as fishing nets, and ongoing coastal development which has devastating effects on their nesting sites. For his excellent efforts, Steve will be heading off on the fantastic 6 night liveaboard trip to the Ribbon Reefs and Osprey Reef with *Undersea Explorer!*

Overall Second Place, Chris Hamilton: 'Found You', an extraordinary image of the pygmy seahorse, *hippocampus bargibanti*, photographed by Chris was selected as Second Place Overall. This rare photograph of the tiny seahorse, perfectly camouflaged within its gorgonian host, wonderfully illustrates one of the many intricate and fragile relationships that exist between coral reefs and their inhabitants. The value of coral reefs is visibly portrayed in this image accentuating the fact that many species will die alongside coral reefs if they are to be wiped out as predicted by the imminent threat of climate change. Chris will be enjoying a sail and dive trip courtesy of New Horizons and a choice of 2 DVDs from the Australian Natural History Unit.

Overall Third Place, Sascha Unger: Sascha's skillful photograph of one of the giants of the sea reaching for the sea surface was selected as our Third Place Overall. This eye-opening image of the iconic manta ray sailing towards the sun shows off the beauty and diversity of life on coral reefs leaving a lasting impression. Sascha will be improving his already impressive photography skills on an Underwater Photography course with PADI and receiving 2 DVDs of his choice generously donated by the Australian Natural History Unit.

Category Winners and Runners Up

Voter's Choice: Damien Siviero

People and the Reef

Winner: Chris Hamilton
Beeden

Runner Up: Gary Brennand

2nd Runner Up: Seanna Cronin and Roger

Creative Visions of Coral Reefs

Winner: Chris Hamilton

Runner Up: Sascha Unger

2nd Runner Up: Roger Beedon

The Reef in Our Hands

Winner: Justin Gilligan

Runner Up: Dean Cropp

2nd Runner Up: Chris Jones

Animal Behaviour

Winner: Steve Rosenberg

Runner Up: Chris Jones

2nd Runner Up: Chris Hamilton

Icons of the Reef

Winner: Sascha Unger
Curnock

Runner Up: Gary Brennand

2nd Runners Up: Justin Gilligan and Matt

Highly Commended: Silke Baron and Steve Rosenberg.

Reef Check Australia Young Photographer of the Year 2007

Overall Winner: Catti Butler

Category Winner, Animal Behaviour: Andrew Jeffries

The Exhibition: Reef Check Australia and Project AWARE would like to thank everyone who has participated in making the inaugural competition such a success. An exhibition of finalists' images is going to be on display at the Port Douglas International Year of the Reef show on 24 & 25th October.

For further press information including access to images please contact Jos Hill at Reef Check Australia via email, media@reefcheckaustralia.org, or telephone, (07) 4724 3950.

Reef Check

Reef Check is a volunteer, non-profit organisation set up by coral researchers following a meeting in 1996 where the global coral reef crisis was first discussed. Reef Check has been collecting data since the first International Year of the Reef in 1997 and is now active in over 90 countries and territories world wide.

Reef Check Australia is based in Townsville and coordinates Reef Check activities within Australia including the flagship Great Barrier Reef project and local Townsville project. www.reefcheckaustralia.org.

Our Vision:

Our vision at Reef Check Australia is the promotion of healthy coral reefs throughout the Australia and Indo-Pacific regions.

Our Mission:

To promote healthy local coral reefs through scientific research, community education and marine conservation.

Our Core Values:

- Raising awareness of the value and sustainability of coral reefs.
- Improving management of coral reefs in Australia and the Indo-Pacific region.
- Empowering local communities in the conservation of their own reefs.
- Maximising stakeholder benefits with minimal cost.
- Acting with professionalism and integrity at all times.

1) Project AWARE Foundation

Our Mission: Project AWARE Foundation conserves underwater environments through education, advocacy and action.

Who We Are: Project AWARE Foundation is the dive industry's leading nonprofit environmental organisation. Offices in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Japan combine efforts to protect aquatic resources in 175 countries around the world.

What We Do: Project AWARE Foundation works in partnership with divers and water enthusiasts to combat challenges facing underwater environments. We involve these



volunteers in hands-on environmental activities like International Cleanup Day and The International Whale Shark Project. Project AWARE also inspires conservation by incorporating its messages in dive training materials as well as creating awareness and education campaigns like Protect the Sharks, Protect the Living Reef and AWARE Kids. The Foundation Grant Program funds grass-roots environmental projects that address key foundation focus areas, volunteer-supported community activism and critical research with direct contributions made by people like you.