

HAPPY NEW YEAR and Welcome to Reef Check Malaysia's FIRST Newsletter for 2011!

As we enter our fifth year of monitoring Malaysia's coral reefs, we are very pleased to report continuing support for our programmes. This issue contains a brief review of 2010, and an outline of our plans for 2011.

Review of 2010

During 2010, RCM continued many of its programmes from previous years, as well as adding more.

Training & Surveys

We trained more divers to do Reef Check surveys, with 30 EcoDivers and 12 EcoDiver Trainers certified during 2010. An increasing number of these were in East Malaysia, and it is encouraging to see more people there getting involved in collecting essential information on their reefs.

As in previous years, many of our new EcoDivers assisted us in surveys, and our survey programme in 2010 covered 46 sites in Peninsular Malaysia (including three new islands – Bidong, Yu and Kapas) and 47 in East Malaysia. Although the total number of surveys was lower than 2009, the information collected adds to our growing understanding of the status of coral reefs in Malaysia.

Results of the surveys are detailed in the 2010 Report, which will be published at the end of January.

The most significant event of the year was the Mass Coral Bleaching that affected reefs around Peninsular Malaysia between May and September. The impacts in East Malaysia were considerably less. Mass bleaching is caused by unusually high sea temperatures and can result in extensive coral mortality. Fortunately, it appears that mortality levels were low (some 5-10%) and the prospects for recovery are good.

However, scientists warn that such events will occur with increasing frequency, and Malaysia needs to take action to improve the resilience of its coral reefs, so that future impacts can be minimised. This will be an important topic for 2011, as we work more closely with the Department of Marine Parks Malaysia to improve monitoring and management of coral reefs around Malaysia.

2011 EcoDiver Training

RCM has already started its 2011 EcoDiver Training programme with pool sessions in the Klang Valley since November 2010.

The other pool session dates are as follow:

January 2011: 15th and 22nd (Saturdays)

February 2011: 12th and 26th (Saturdays)

Education

Our school education programme continues to develop, under the overall banner "Rainforest to Reef".



2010 was the third year this programme has operated on the East coast islands (Perhentian, Redang and Tioman), sponsored by Alstom Power. To date, over 350 children from the islands have participated in the programme, which teaches basic environmental education and good habits.

In KL, we continue to work with SK Taman Tun Dr Ismail (2), together with KPMG. This programme brings the benefits of environmental education to city schools. In 2010 we launched a recycling scheme at the school, and we are hoping to replicate this in other schools in the future.

In 2010 we further extended our urban schools programmes, with funding from CIMB Foundation. We are now redesigning this programme as a Roadshow, a highly interactive approach to education, which will visit schools for a day to teach simple conservation messages.



Dive centre network

Calling All Dive Centres: We are looking to expand our small network of Reef Check Certified Facilities. You can help us by training more EcoDivers and arranging surveys to improve reef monitoring in your area. Becoming a Certified Facility is easy – all you need is an EcoDiver trainer on staff. Contact us to ask how it all works!

Please contact any of the dive centres listed below if you are interested in EcoDiver training or if you want to participate in a Reef Check survey.

Watercolours	Perhentian	info@watercolours.com.my
Redang Kalong	Redang	ddenmsia@tm.net.my
Scuba Explorers	Tenggol	info@scubaexplorers.com.my
Tioman Dive Centre	Tioman	enquiries@tioman-dive-centre.com
The Reef Dive Resort	Mataking	sales@mataking.com
Borneo Divers	Kota Kinabalu	information@borneodivers.info



Community

RCM has been working with communities in the Perhentian islands for the last two years, with funding from the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). The focus has been on reducing impacts to coral reefs from tourism and several projects have been implemented, largely focusing on recycling and reducing waste.



The Association of Operators Pulau Perhentian Terengganu (Persatuan Pengusaha-pengusaha Pulau Perhentian Terengganu) has now taken responsibility for extending the programme, with funding from SGP, to expand this project into looking specifically at waste management on the islands. This year will see several small scale investments including composting, water refill systems and improving recycling.

The Association will also continue its efforts to ensure cleanliness on the beaches around the islands by arranging monthly beach cleanups among its members. This has the added advantage of improving communications between stakeholders.

The Association has up a website (www.perhentian.island.org) and Facebook group (Persatuan Pengusaha-pengusaha Pulau Perhentian Terengganu (PPPT) to promote its activities. Feel free to visit the sites and leave your feedback, especially if you have recently visited the Perhentian Islands!

RCM also has an on-going project in Pangkor, where we have recently implemented Phase 1 of our first coral transplant project. Working with scientists from UKM, we have created a small coral nursery, and in a few months we will transplant samples to a nearby site to start to rehabilitate a reef popular with local snorkelling guides.



Beach cleanup organised by the Association together with Reef Check, Department of Marine Parks and Majlis Daerah Besut.



Coral Transplant Project in Pangkor.

New Supporters

For 2011, we will be working on a variety of programmes with new supporters:

- Jendela Batik is raising funds for RCM through a donation from sales of its new collection, to be launched in early 2011.
- Shook restaurant at YTL's StarHill Gallery is phasing out sales of water in plastic bottles. They will be making a donation to RCM for every glass bottle of Evian sold during the promotion this year.

We continue to rely on sponsorship to implement our programmes, and we are grateful to these and other sponsors for their on-going support.

Plans for 2011

While all these activities will continue in 2011, we will put particular emphasis on the following areas:

- Surveys: we need to continue to extend our survey programme to cover more areas of Malaysia's reefs. We hope to work more closely with government departments and will dive operators.
- Bleaching: the mass bleaching of 2010 will recur, and we want to work with relevant stakeholders to increase the resilience of Malaysia's reefs to future bleaching events.
- East Malaysia: to date, most of our activities have focussed on Peninsular Malaysia. For 2011, we want to develop our programmes in East Malaysia, to collect more data and communicate more effectively about coral reef issues.



Reef Check Malaysia New Website and Social Network

We have now got our website up and running!
Find out more about us at
www.reefcheck.org.my



We are now active on Facebook.
Add us as friends and join our group – Reef Check Malaysia, to find out more on what is happening!

You can also follow us on Twitter
@rcmalaysia for more current updates and news on our activities.



Supporters

Reef Check Malaysia is grateful to the following organisations for their support:
Without their help, we would not be able to continue our work to preserve Malaysia's marine resources.

