

Spring 2009

# CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance

## CORAL CELEBRATES FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY!

Founded in the fall of 1994, CORAL is gearing up to celebrate its fifteenth anniversary. In honor of this momentous achievement, the CORAL staff has been busy planning some celebratory occasions, including a gala event in September and our much-anticipated dive trip to Fiji over Thanksgiving weekend.

By mining the archives of *CORAL Current*, we can trace the development of CORAL from a small, grassroots alliance to the only international organization working exclusively to protect coral reefs on a global scale.

As many of CORAL's supporters will remember, the organization was originally founded by Stephen Colwell to galvanize the dive community for coral reef protection. Our first microgrant was awarded to the Bonaire Marine Park in 1994. The following year, CORAL joined the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), which was the first effort to bring together government agencies, scientists, and NGOs for the purpose of developing global coral reef conservation strategies.

CORAL's membership program was launched in 1996. According to the winter newsletter of that year (see photo at right), CORAL moved into a new office in Berkeley to make the organization more accessible to volunteers. We were also chosen from more than 2,500 nonprofit organizations to be featured in a PBS series called *The Visionaries*. The 30-minute episode focused on CORAL's education and conservation efforts, including its collaborative work with other local and international organizations.

By 1998, CORAL had co-founded the Bonaire Dive Festival, the largest environmental event of its kind in the Caribbean, where participants see first-

hand how marine protected areas create healthy reef environments. According to the 1998 summer newsletter, CORAL's membership had grown to 3,500 members and microgrants in the amount of \$22,000 were awarded to organizations working to keep coral reefs alive in Micronesia, Philippines, and Florida.

CORAL founded Dive In to Earth Day in 2000 to encourage the public to participate in Earth Day activities focused on marine themes. That first year, nearly 5,000 divers and other marine enthusiasts around the world participated in underwater and beach cleanups, fish and coral surveys, mooring buoy installations, and artificial reef installations.

A new era for CORAL began in 2002 with the hire of Executive Director Brian Huse. In the summer newsletter from that year, Brian described the achieve-



Working Together to Keep Coral Reefs Alive

CORAL is the only international organization working exclusively to save coral reefs. We provide education, tools, and inspiration to help local communities become passionate environmental stewards. Together we develop well-managed marine protected areas and sustainable businesses to benefit coral reefs and people.

ment of a personal milestone: becoming certified to dive in the chilly waters of California's Monterey Bay. CORAL's shift to building strong marine protected areas (known then as "coral parks") had begun, evidenced by Brian's promise to CORAL's supporters. "I will strive to ensure that CORAL's parks and public awareness campaigns take advantage of our shared commitment to create and enhance well-managed coral parks that form the basis for the restoration of reefs worldwide."

In 2003, CORAL was chosen by USAID to foster sustainable tourism along the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. That grant led to the publication of the *Voluntary Standards for Marine Recreation in the Mesoamerican Reef System*. By 2005, CORAL had completed the design of its new approach to reef conservation: the Coral Reef Sustainable Destination (CRSD) model. That groundbreaking approach to saving coral reefs is still in use today and has since been validated by the scientific community.

By the summer of 2008, the CRSD model had been implemented in seven countries: Mexico, Belize, Honduras, the United States, Fiji, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. Today, CORAL continues to unite communities to save coral reefs. By working together we give our majestic reefs a fighting chance. Over the next fifteen years we will continue to build a grassroots revolution to protect our precious coral reefs around the world. We'll check back in 2024 to see how we've done.



CORAL's Winter 1996 newsletter

## THE CORAL REEF ALLIANCE (CORAL)

351 California Street, Suite 650  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
(415) 834-0900  
[www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org)

"Working Together to Keep Coral Reefs Alive"

## CORAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Lyn Ciocca**, Board Chair

**H. William Jesse Jr.**, Treasurer

**Mark Rovner**, Secretary

**Linda Cain**

**Rod Fujita**

**Paula Hayes**

**Leah Bunce Karrer**

**Katheryn Patterson Kempner**

**Dennis H. Liberson**

**Elizabeth Ulmer**

**Elizabeth Wagner**

**Gilbert P. Williamson**

## CORAL STAFF

**Brian Huse**

Executive Director

**Rick MacPherson**

Conservation Programs Director

**Tom Meshishnek**

Finance and Administration Director

**Diana Williams**

Development Director

**Sarah Freiermuth**

Assistant Director of Development

**Julie Bennett**

Communications Manager

**Bryan Dias**

Conservation Programs Manager

**Liz Foote**

Hawaii Field Manager

**Vicky Seid**

Accountant

**Candace Leong**

Conservation Programs Associate

**Carolyn Nash**

Foundation Relations Associate

**Victoria Bergstrom**

Development Assistant

**Joanna Solins**

Communications Assistant

## Field Representatives:

Jennifer Baing (PNG), Sirilo "Didi" Dulunaqio (Fiji), Kenneth Johnson (Mexico), Jenny Myton (Honduras), Kara Osada (Hawaii), Valentine Rosado (Belize), Naneng Setiasih (Indonesia)

Copyright © 2009 by the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)  
Editor: Julie Bennett  
Designer: Damien Scogin (dls4@mac.com)

*CORAL Current* is published quarterly by the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), an IRS 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. Copies of our audited financial statement are available at [www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org) or by phone request.

For comments, questions, or contributions to *CORAL Current*, please email us at [communications@coral.org](mailto:communications@coral.org).

West End, Roatan, Honduras  
Photo by Julie Bennett

# BREAKING NEWS FROM CORAL'S PROJECT SITES

## MESOAMERICA

**MEXICO:** The CORAL Reef Leadership Network training program is being expanded in Mexico and throughout CORAL's project sites to include community and private sector components. The expansion targets local community groups, restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus, and so on, for training in environmental best practices. Our goal is to make a direct connection between healthy reefs and a robust tourism economy to inspire all members of a coral reef community to support reef protection.

**BELIZE:** Two new CORAL Reef Leaders—Billy Leslie, President of the San Pedro Tour Guide Association, and Mariela Archer, Education Officer at Hol Chan Marine Reserve—taught their first Sustainable Marine Recreation workshop in Caye Caulker. Nearly thirty people attended the workshop, representing staff from Caye Caulker Marine Reserve, Belize Diving Service, Red Mangrove Eco Adventures, French Angel Expeditions, Xtreme Adventures, Natural History Expeditions, and independent tour guides.

**HONDURAS:** CORAL is participating in a Packard-funded career program for MBA students drawing from the top sixteen business schools in the country. One student will work with CORAL for ten weeks over the summer to draft a business plan for the Roatan Marine Park Association. The student will receive an orientation at the CORAL offices in San Francisco, spend one week visiting the Roatan Marine Park, and use the remaining time to write the business plan and other materials.

## INDO-PACIFIC

**FIJI:** The MarViva Foundation has provided funds for CORAL to create an enforcement and compliance regime in partnership with the Namena Marine Reserve and Waitabu Marine Park. The new program will give park managers the ability to enforce the rules of the MPAs and properly record their activities. CORAL will develop a reporting procedure, fund staff time for the rangers, and perform data analysis to better inform long-term planning and activities.

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG):** Field Rep Jennifer Baing made an introductory presentation to thirty students from Madang's Divine Word University. The students have joined CORAL's local conservation effort by becoming candidates for the CORAL Reef Leadership Network training program.

**RAJA AMPAT:** At the end of March, Indonesia Field Rep Naneng Setiasih, traveled from Bali to Raja Ampat to present a Sustainable Marine Recreation workshop in Indonesian to the staff of the Misool Eco Resort. While in Misool, Naneng recruited a young local man named Razak to help her develop a shorter version of the workshop targeted to the live-aboard operators that visit the resort.

**HAWAII:** Conservation Programs Director, Rick MacPherson, traveled to the Big Island with Hawaii Field Manager, Liz Foote, and Field Rep Kara Osada, to train a new class of CORAL Reef Leaders. The nine students, who represent staff members from the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, Captain Zodiac, Dolphin Journeys, Kona Honu Divers, Jack's Diving Locker, Kohala Center, Reef Check, and Surfrider Foundation, completed the training in Kona during the third week of March.

# The Status of Coral Reefs of the World

Alice's Mound, East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea  
Photo by Jeff Yonover

According to the most recent *Status of Coral Reefs of the World*, a report published by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), 19 percent of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed. The report, which summarizes the expert opinions of 372 coral reef scientists and managers from 96 countries, estimates that "15 percent of reefs are seriously threatened with loss within the next ten to twenty years, and 20 percent are under threat of loss in twenty to forty years."

Since the last GCRMN status report was published in 2004, reefs have effectively been marking time. Although some coral reef areas recovered well after a mass bleaching event in 1998, damage from the Indian Ocean tsunami, bleaching events in the Caribbean, and increased human pressures have caused the recovery of reefs worldwide to be slow.

The report's number one recommendation for action to conserve coral reefs is to "urgently combat global climate change," which is currently the greatest threat to coral reefs and the people who depend on them. Among other recommended actions to protect reefs include the efforts CORAL makes in its project sites worldwide: maximizing reef resilience by minimizing direct human pressures and improving the management and enforcement capacity of existing marine protected areas (MPAs).

Human pressures such as overfishing and destructive fishing, pollution from poor land use, and habitat loss from unsustainable development are especially damaging to reefs in developing countries. According to the report, these countries "will need assistance in expanding their MPA networks" and "[improving] coastal management by upgrading capacity and providing funds to implement community-based management and develop alternative livelihoods to take pressures off reefs."

To download the report, go to [www.gcrmn.org](http://www.gcrmn.org).

## TOP 10 THREATS TO CORAL REEFS

1. Coral bleaching from warmer seawater due to global climate change
2. Rising concentrations of dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> due to global climate change
3. Diseases, plagues, and invasive species
4. Excess sediments flowing off the land
5. Pollution by nutrients and chemicals arising from poor land management, agriculture, and industry
6. Overfishing and destructive fishing, especially of algal grazing fish, the "immune system" of coral reefs
7. Unsustainable and destructive development of coastal areas
8. Increasing poverty and populations, and loss of agricultural land
9. Poor capacity for management and lack of resources, especially in small island countries
10. Weak political will, and ineffective oceans governance

## UNDERWATER FARTING CONTRIBUTES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

According to the English-language German newspaper, *The Local*, scientists at the Max Planck Institute and Denmark's Aarhus University have found that mussels, freshwater snails, and other underwater creatures fart laughing gas, otherwise known as *nitrous oxide*, when nitrate is present in water. According to Fanni Aspetsberger of the Max Planck Institute, "There's nitrate in water that has been polluted by humans, so the more we pollute, the higher the production of this problematic gas will be." Nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide are just two of many greenhouse gases that have been increasingly released into our atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution—and that cause human-accelerated climate change.



Scorpionfish in Barrel Sponge, Sangeang Island, Indonesia  
Photo by Dennis H. Liberson

# CORAL Sponsors Fish Wardens for Waitabu Marine Park

In early March, CORAL sent six Waitabu community members to attend a fish warden training on Beqa Island. The new fish wardens can now patrol the waters of the Waitabu Marine Park, monitoring activities and enforcing fishing laws—a major milestone in the sustainability of the park. The wardens will also help CORAL and the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA) with projects to collect and analyze data about poaching incidents. Given that poaching has been identified as the most serious threat to marine conservation in Fiji, these new fish wardens will provide an extremely valuable service with impacts that will extend beyond the borders of the marine park.

The use of honorary fish wardens has been recognized in Fiji for half a century. Under Fiji's Fisheries Act, the fisheries minister is granted the power to appoint honorary fish wardens to help prevent, detect, and prosecute infractions against fisheries laws. The fish wardens are usually members of a community that owns an *qoliqoli*, or traditional fishing ground, and are essential for patrolling these areas and enforcing the local rules.

The Department of Fisheries offers trainings to certify new fish wardens, but the sessions must be arranged and funded independently. Supporters of the Waitabu Marine Park have been trying to get a fish warden training there for more than seven years, but efforts have been hampered by the lack of a fisheries officer in Taveuni. Finally, this winter, Beqa Adventure Divers generously offered space in their privately-sponsored training to the Waitabu community. With funding from the MarViva Foundation, CORAL was able to send six men from Waitabu to Beqa Island for the training.

Waitabu participants in the training included Josaia Saro, Waitabu Marine Park Treasurer and primary boat captain, and Apisai Kulataudrau, Waitabu Marine Park Assistant Manager. They were joined by four representatives of the *matagali* (clans) in the village, two of whom are also Waitabu Marine Park snorkel guides. Together with ten staff members from Beqa Adventure Divers, they spent three days learning

about coral reef ecology and Fiji's fisheries laws from lecturers sent by the government. The report from the participants was glowing—they learned a huge amount from the lecturers and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Now that they are certified, the new fish wardens will have full authority to enforce fisheries laws. They can arrest anyone found fishing in the marine protected area (MPA), confiscate fishing gear and boats, and deliver poachers to police for prosecution. Unfortunately, the Fiji government cannot provide the means to carry out these duties, so CORAL is working to ensure that the wardens in Waitabu have the resources they need to protect the marine park. The Waitabu community already has a boat that can be used for patrolling, and CORAL plans to provide the wardens with supplemental gear such as binoculars and a GPS device.

The wardens will also play a key role in a new CORAL project to capture and analyze data about poaching incidents. Wardens will record specific information about the location, time, and nature of the infractions they encounter, and CORAL will then analyze the data to look for patterns in poaching activity. The report will be used to develop a more stream-



Warden training graduates  
Photo by Nanise Ledua

lined and effective patrolling strategy that will make the best use of limited resources.

The poaching survey information will also be delivered to FLMMA for its reports on the levels of poaching across Fiji. The data will be used later this year to make changes in fisheries legislation and increase protection of MPAs.

CORAL is implementing poaching data surveys in at least four project sites. A cross comparison of the collected information will help our conservation programs staff to develop a handbook of best practices for implementing enforcement and compliance in community-based marine protected areas, a tool that should help to increase MPA effectiveness around the world.



Waitabu Marine Park patrol boat  
Photo by Bryan Dias



# CORAL Donor Spotlight: Don Listwin

Although Don Listwin originally hails from the Great White North of Canada, his favorite place in the world is a picturesque island off the coast of Belize called Ambergris Caye. Don and his family have been coming to this area of Belize for fifteen years and have fallen in love with the shimmering blue water, the small community, and the very accessible coral reefs just offshore. Recently, the Listwins decided to build a house on the north side of the island.

“The Mesoamerican Barrier Reef is only about 1,000 meters from my front door,” says Don. “I’ve always dreamed of waking up, having breakfast, then yelling out ‘I’m going diving, who’s coming with me?’ and spending the morning underwater before having a nice lunch back at the house.” In the twenty-five years that Don has been scuba certified, he’s been diving in Hawaii, Cayman Islands, Fiji, Tahiti, Turks and Caicos, and Vanuatu,

among other spectacular coral reef destinations.

His most memorable dive involved a 30-foot whale shark feeding on snapper eggs near Placencia, Belize; the dive he’d most like to forget brought him face to face with a cranky-looking lemon shark in Moorea. Over the years, Don has witnessed “noticeable degradation” on the reefs. He claims “there is less wildlife and the coral itself isn’t as diverse or healthy.” In his varied travels, Don is starting to see more emphasis placed on marine protected areas, mooring buoy programs, and responsible diving practices; however, as a society we’re not quite where we need to be yet.

Don was first introduced to CORAL’s work after our development director attended a seminar at which Don was speaking. Currently serving as board chair of telecommunications equipment supplier Calix and biomedical informat-

ics developer GenoLogics, Don is the former CEO of Openwave and was an executive at Cisco Systems. He is on the board of the Public Library of Science, and is also the founder of the Listwin Family and Canary Foundations, both of which fund cancer research.

“I have a selfish interest in what CORAL is doing because it operates in a place that I care about,” Don reports. “CORAL has the right model; it brings tools to people and works *with* communities. In my experience, that’s the right way to go about international development.”

According to Don, “a good nonprofit should eventually go out of business for having achieved its goal.” When Don’s foundations achieve their goals, he’s going to relax on the beach in Belize. With his generous support of CORAL’s conservation programs in Ambergris Caye, a healthy set of thriving corals reefs will always be waiting just outside his door.

## New Communications Assistant Joins CORAL

CORAL welcomes Joanna Solins to its San Francisco staff. Joanna brings experience in both the environmental and publishing fields to CORAL. After studying coral reef ecology on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef during a semester abroad, Joanna pursued her interest in marine ecology and conservation in her work as a program educator at the New England Aquarium in Boston. She then spent nearly a year working on organic farms and traveling before relocating to San Francisco. Joanna has been writing materials for educational publishers for a number of years, and served as a CORAL volunteer before joining the staff.



Photo by Benjamin Morse



**THE CORAL REEF ALLIANCE**  
 351 California Street, Suite 650  
 San Francisco, CA 94104  
[www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org)

Nonprofit Org.  
 U.S. Postage Paid  
 San Francisco, CA  
 Permit No. 925



Log on to [www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org) to sign up for *E-Current*, our free electronic newsletter.

## CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of the Coral Reef Alliance



Taveuni, Fiji  
 Photo by Julie Bennett

# Fiji Dive Trip: Limited Spots Still Available

In honor of CORAL's 15th anniversary this fall, we're gathering together a group of adventurous friends to go diving over Thanksgiving, November 21–28, 2009. We will dive aboard the *Nai'a*, a 120-foot luxury motor sailing vessel custom-built for live-aboard scuba diving. We set sail from the city of Lautoka, just north of Nadi on the island of Viti Levu, and dive spectacular sites near Lomaiviti, Bligh Water, and the Namena Marine Reserve—CORAL's oldest project site.

As we sail through the Fiji Islands, we'll be diving some of the finest coral reefs and fish-filled channels in the world. From manta rays to mantis shrimp, dolphins to dartfish, sharks to vibrant soft corals, we'll experience Fiji's ultimate dive sites. One

of CORAL's senior program staff members will be on board to interpret what we're seeing underwater; lead discussions about coral reef ecology, conservation, and Fijian culture; and showcase the many ways CORAL is uniting communities to protect our planet's coral reefs.

When we aren't diving, we'll be visiting villages in the Kubulau District, where CORAL is working with local communities to set up sustainable financing projects through tourist-based microenterprises.

We have a few spots remaining, so if you'd like to join us, please visit [www.coral.org/dive\\_trip](http://www.coral.org/dive_trip) for information or contact Diana Williams at (415) 834-0900 x305 or [dwilliams@coral.org](mailto:dwilliams@coral.org) to make a reservation.