



Welcome to Reef Check Malaysia's third newsletter of the year!

Hi everyone, welcome to Reef Check Malaysia's third newsletter of 2019. Busy, busy, busy! That's exactly how we would describe how things at RCM has been going on for the past few months. Here are some updates on what our team has been working on, and making great progress at it.

EcoDiver Training and Surveys 2019

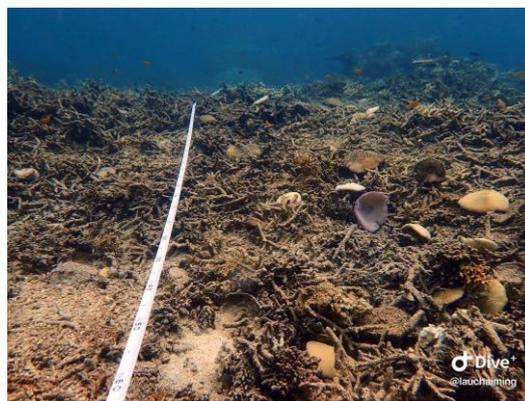
We are still in the midst of conducting our annual Reef Check surveys around Malaysia. Towards the end of April, we completed our surveys at Usukan Cove, led by one of our former colleagues, Ummi Haslinda and joined by our regular EcoDivers, Gordon Reid, Lau Chak Onn and Faiz.

We've also completed our surveys in Perhentian with sponsorship from SeaVoice Divers and Bubbles Dive Centre. As for our surveys in Redang, it has also been completed with sponsorship from SM Scuba Dive Team and Redang Bay, as well as Redang Pelangi Resort, which also partially sponsored the surveys in Bidong and Yu Islands. 9. During our surveys in Redang, Bidong, Yu and Tenggol, bleaching was observed. Redang recorded the most severe bleaching situation, with some sites recording almost 100% bleached coral population. NOAA satellite data has reported that the water temperature was on the rise in this region, which has reached 31°C. The reefs in Redang were also compounded by Typhoon Pabuk earlier this year which has caused some damage.

For the first half of this year, we have certified 28 new EcoDives with help from Reef Check EcoDiver trainers in SeaVoice Divers, Juara Turtle Project and DM Scuba.



The team that conducted the Usukan Cove surveys



The damage done by Typhoon Pabuk

For those interested to become EcoDivers, please feel free to contact us at ecodiver@reefcheck.org.my. For more information on the EcoDiver training programme, please visit our website at www.reefcheck.org.my.

Reef Check around the world...

Although our main focus is training divers to monitor coral reefs in Malaysia, Reef Check Malaysia is also working with partners overseas to help them build up training and survey capabilities.

In the last few weeks, our General manager, Julian, has travelled to meet RC representatives in Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore (yes, they have nice reefs there!!) and Thailand, to discuss how to improve monitoring on a regional basis – particularly in the Coral Triangle. More recently, though, he travelled a little further afield – to Hawaii! Working with two industry groups, he trained four EcoDiver Trainers and six EcoDivers, all of whom have committed to building a local EcoDiver programme in their countries.

While there, he met with the local equivalent of Marine Parks Malaysia, the Division of Aquatic Resources, who manage MPAs around Hawaii. They are interested to work with Reef Check in Hawaii to extend their existing monitoring efforts to cover more sites around Big Island. The industry groups were keen to learn from RCM's experience in establishing an extensive, sustainable programme.



Some photos from Julian's trip

“It was a long trip...but well worth it to experience the problems of establishing coral reef monitoring in different places. It's amazing that the problems they face in Hawaii are very similar to those that we face in Malaysia – and critically, they are working hard to involve local stakeholders more in coral reef management – exactly the same thing that we are trying to do in Malaysia.”

Learn more about this event in Reef Check Foundation's newsletter:

<https://reefcheck.org/reef-news/a-big-welcome-to-the-newest-ecodivers-and-trainers-on-the-big-island-of-hawaii>

Green Fins Training

In April, 3 of our colleagues, Nadhirah Rifai, Alvin Chelliah and Chen Sue Yee attended the Green Fins Train-the-Trainer Programme in Phuket. Upon completion of this training, they were upgraded from Green Fins assessors to Green Fins Assessor Trainer. This training was conducted by the Reef World Foundation and joined by the Thailand Green Fins team. The following week, 2 of our colleagues, Edmund and Shahir were subsequently trained to be Green Fins Assessors by the newly certified Green Fins Assessor Trainers from RCM. This week-long training was conducted on Tioman Island, together with representatives from the Reef World Foundation.



Our new Green Fins Assessor Trainers



The new addition to the Green Fins Assessors team, Shahir and Edmund (holding certificates)

Tioman Island Programme – Cintai Tioman

As our recycling efforts on the island are picking up, we are also glad to add on e-waste recycling to our current recycling programme! We are now working with EARTH to collect e-waste on Tioman Island, which will be sent out for recycling. Some of the e-waste we are now collecting include mobile phones, laptops, cameras, remote controls and internet modems.

Some of our other ongoing efforts on the island include the school education programme, which takes place every month. We cover a wide range of topics, from marine life to the environment around the island, and it is our hope that these students learn how to appreciate and protect the invaluable nature at their doorstep. We are also constantly getting reports of ghost nets in the islands around Tioman. The latest incidents involved the retrieval of two nets with an estimated weight of 500kg. These nets have caused the death of a turtle and shark, as have some previous nets. Thanks to the Tioman Marine Conservation Group (TMCG) and the local Marine Parks unit, all reports of such nets have been dealt with swiftly. Do follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CintaiTioman> for regular updates on our programmes and activities on the island.

Updates from Mantanani

We have had both a baler and shredder machine in our newly established Mantanani Plastic Recycling Centre (MPRC) for a few months now. With the help of these machines, the plastic recycling activities on the island have increased and become more efficient! 29 bales of compressed plastic bottles (495kg) from the island has been sent out to the recycling company on the mainland! On top of that, we now have 22 bales (approximately 370kg) of compressed plastic bottles in MPRC. We have also conducted more than 10 educational awareness programmes including trainings, talks and demonstrations with various parties such as school and university students as well as Mantanani youth and women groups.



Plastic recycling demonstration



Plastic bottles from MPRC ready to be transported out of the island

Our plastic bottles collection effort from house-to-house is still ongoing. Since January 2019 until end of June 2019, approximately 36,000 of plastic bottles has been prevented for ending up on the sea through this weekly collection done on the island.

You can follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/cintaimantanani/> for updates on this community programme.

Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project in Pulau Sibul, Johor

In April, we conducted the first ever Eco-friendly Snorkel Guide training course in the Marine Parks office in Mersing. We had a total of 28 participants who attended, and we hope to see more in future trainings.

We also conducted the Sibul-Tinggi Island Co-Management Committee second quarterly meeting in Pulau Tinggi, at the end of April. This meeting was to discuss the local issues and planned activities for 2019. The committee agreed to more capacity building and training programmes for communities such as the Eco-friendly Snorkel Guide training, development of new tourism-based supplementary livelihood, and to participate in the International Coastal Cleanup event in September. Those present at the meeting were representatives from Marine Parks, Mersing District Council, Marine Police, APMM, Mersing District Office, resort operators from Sibul and Tinggi, and local communities.



The first Eco-friendly Snorkel Guide course in Mersing



The Sibul-Tinggi Island Co-Management Committee second quarterly meeting

International Coastal Cleanup Day (ICC) 2019 in Malaysia

As you may already know, RCM was recently confirmed as one of the coordinators for the annual International Coastal Clean-up Day. Started over 30 years by The Ocean Conservancy, a US-based conservation organization, the annual event attracts thousands of volunteers worldwide, who clean hundreds of km of coastline every year. Last year, our first Malaysia-wide clean-up effort attracted over 5,000 volunteers in 80 locations around Malaysia.

Reef Check Malaysia, together with Yinson Holdings Bhd as the main sponsor, and Coca-Cola as our strategic partner, is organizing this nationwide beach clean-up on Saturday, 21st September 2019, in conjunction with the International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) Day. Several partners and friends, from individuals to companies, have already agreed to lead beach clean-ups in their own area. This effort is part of our long battle against marine debris and plastic waste in Malaysia.



We are currently recruiting partners and volunteers across the country, who would be interested to join us on 21st September 2019 (updated locations to be posted on our Facebook group). If you want to commit to organizing a team of volunteers (friends, family, colleagues) for a few hours on that day, please email us (cleanup@reefcheck.org.my) so that we can send you more information on how to organize a beach clean-up and collect data which will help us identify long-term solutions for trash-free seas. Do join our Facebook group for this event (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/msiamarinedebris/>) to receive the latest updates regarding this event.

The 2019 International Coastal Clean Up Day in Malaysia is proudly sponsored by Yinson Holdings Bhd (Platinum Sponsor for the event).

