

Marine Research Station

Quarterly Report: 1st Quarter 2009. GMRS Phase 5, January – April.

Current Personnel: **Jason Kincaid** – Station Manager and PADI Dive Instructor, **Kate Barley MSc** – Chief Marine Scientist, Station Manager and PADI Dive Instructor,

Mark Tilley BSc – Assistant Marine Scientist, **Paul Fuller** – Trainee.

Volunteers: Stewart Morton, Katie Maurina, Liz Slaughter, Ross Collins, Nadina Hnatiw, Dean Gray, Sarah Perry, Mike England, Lisa Holton, Callum Brodie, Lucy Barber.



Update and Overview

This phase we have moved to a new location in Staniard Creek at Timothy Johnson's property and bar (Colors). The start of the phase was full of dive training and building projects including the dive stand, compressor area and a brand new rock oven on the beach which has proven fantastic for bread making and dinners. The weather has been our nemesis this phase with prolonged periods of strong wind affecting our diving. We have however carried out many surveys with our volunteers on the reef after they learnt the fish to the satisfactory level. Three of our volunteers have also completed their PADI Rescue Diver courses at the end of the phase. Our last Sunday saw us carry out a daring forest fire back burn at Churches Blue hole, helping the BNT to protect the substantial wooden structure present at the site.



Sightings - On February 13th we were all lucky enough to swim with four Dolphins in the shallows not far from shore. The group was comprised of three adult dolphins and one juvenile (about 1m long!). During mangrove snorkels 6 large Spotted Eagle Rays (*Aetobatus narinari*) were seen. Some of the volunteers were lucky enough to see two large Nurse Sharks (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) on a fun dive at our dive site Kate-atori-em resting amongst the reef formations. The Blackear Wrasse (*Halichoeres poeyi*) and the Gray Triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*) have been spotted in the shallow sea-grass in front of the station. Our trainee Paul Fuller also spotted a Silky Shark (*Carcharinus falciformis*) in deep water whilst snorkelling from the boat. The huge resident Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) at Amphitheatre was also observed by one lucky volunteer and our trainee.

Coral Reef Research

Number of REEF Surveys Completed	28
Hours underwater surveying REEF fish	18
Number of sites surveyed	4
Depth range (m)	5-20

After completing dive training, peak performance buoyancy and fish identification tests on land and in water our volunteers were ready to survey. This phase we managed to carry out 28 REEF fish surveys (11 last phase) for diversity and abundance at four different sites on the reef, despite the wind

wreaking havoc with our schedules. The results of our surveys will be submitted on the REEF website in the near future very shortly.

Unfortunately due to the weather we were unable to complete any Reef Check surveys this phase despite training some of our volunteers. This was unfortunate but hopefully we will be able to carry out Reef Check surveys on our permanent monitoring sites next phase.

Community School Work

This phase we have been able to carry out a teaching program to three classes in Staniard creek primary school, on a Thursday afternoon. The enduring theme this phase has been symbiosis and helping out the environment so that it continues to provide for the inhabitants of Andros. Having lots of volunteers has meant that we were able to have lots of help in every class and the process has worked very well with a new topic every week for the children. We have covered the island itself in terms of defence from hurricanes and the ocean's power. Jobs provided directly by the reef e.g. fishing (commercial and subsistence) or scuba diving guides were looked at as well as trying to push the prospect of working for the BNT in either the existing marine protected areas on the barrier reef or the west side national park. Food was a great topic with many of the kids knowing more than we did about the resources here! We were trying to explain the concept of responsible harvesting through the use of worksheets and activities. **The new marine turtle legislation banning any capture or killing of turtles as well as outlawing the use of any turtle by-products (shells, meat, eggs e.t.c) from April 1st 2009 was discussed (with mixed attitudes !).** Also looking at case studies of regions on a global scale which have not protected their natural resources was hoped to reinforce the ideas we had already covered in previous weeks. The kids and the volunteers as well as the staff enjoyed the process and we hope to have just as successful an experience next phase.

Staff Change-over

It is with regret that we have to announce the ending of a very successful relationship between Greenforce Bahamas and two of its long standing staff Kate Barley and Jason Kincaid. After a period of nearly two years training volunteers in diving and marine science as well as making their experience as good as it could possibly be they are moving on. The British Virgin Islands await them as dive instructors and I'm sure they will do just as well there also.

Taking their place the new staff are Siobhan Station Manager and PADI Dive Instructor, Ian Hamilton BSc as Assistant Marine Scientist and myself as Chief Marine Scientist (eek !). We aim to keep up the high standards that they have set for us in the future.



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Acknowledgements

All the staff at Greenforce Bahamas would like to thank the volunteers of 'Phase 5 GMRS' for their help, enthusiasm, humour and work this phase, we couldn't have done it without you (no honestly we couldn't !). A big thanks to our trainee Paul Fuller for all of his help this phase, we will miss him and his camera but wish him all the best for the future. Well done to all of our divers who have passed Open Water and Advanced Open Water this phase we know Jason is a pain to work with but someone has to do it. Apologies about the wind – we will try and cut down on the beans next phase ! Thanks for your patience when the diving wasn't on and we were finding alternatives. We hope you all enjoyed yourselves and wish you all the best in the future, be that travels, university, jobs or life. Thanks for a great phase.

Mark Tilley