

Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation Volunteer Recruitment for 2009 Surveys

Seeking Volunteer Scuba Divers

Project Seahorse is a ZSL marine conservation project that has been running since 1996. The Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation (registered Filipino NGO) seeks volunteer, certified SCUBA divers (minimum 15 logged dives) who are interested in participating in a long-term monitoring program for assessing Marine Protected Area (MPA) effectiveness in northern Bohol, Philippines.

The surveys are conducted biannually, one in the dry season (March - April) and one in the wet season (September - October). An eight-week commitment is required comprising approximately two weeks of training and six weeks of survey work. Surveys are easily influenced by weather and other unpredictable events, so the duration of the fieldwork may vary. If completed quickly, volunteers will be asked to assist with other conservation work, such as data encoding or assisting with other biological field programs.

Diving Survey Work

In the spring (Dry season: Mar - Apr), sites are surveyed for fish communities and seahorses. Benthic community and coral complexity are also censused in specific sites. In the fall (Wet season: Sep - Oct), benthic communities, coral complexity and seahorses are censused. Diving will involve shallow dives, generally 3-10 m, rarely to a maximum of 14 m, both during the day (benthic, rugosity and fish surveys) and during the night (seahorse surveys). Photography is used in the benthic surveys; although beneficial, no prior experience with underwater photography is required. We will select 3-4 international volunteers for each survey.

Requirements for Volunteering

The Project Seahorse Foundation requires a donation of \$2,400 USD to help cover survey costs, local travel, accommodation, and food. Volunteers must also provide their own SCUBA gear and are responsible for the cost of their return airfare to the Philippines, visa costs, travel/health insurance and appropriate vaccinations, together with providing proof of a current dive medical and dive insurance.

A working knowledge of coral reef fish families and benthic fauna (esp. corals) and flora would be an advantage. (See recommended texts)

Volunteers will be supervised by the Project Seahorse Foundation Survey Biologist and based in Handumon (Jandayan Island). On arrival in Cebu City, the Project Seahorse Foundation National Coordinator will organize a comprehensive orientation on its programs and projects, MPA survey schedule, safety protocols, and community and team living.

Background information

Long-term monitoring of Marine Protected Areas

In 1998, Project Seahorse initiated the long term monitoring programme for assessing MPA effectiveness in northern Bohol. The motivation behind the programme is three-fold: (1) to

provide up-to-date monitoring data to inform fishing communities about the status of their reefs, (2) to catalyze community interest in managing and establishing additional MPAs, and (3) to provide scientifically robust data for assessing the impact on MPAs on the recovery of coral reefs.

Trial surveys were conducted in the late 1990s, and the full design of the programme was established in 2001. Over the past decade, nearly 50 international volunteers have participated in the programme, and it is with their hard work and commitment that we continue to meet our objective of quantifying the response of seahorses, fishes and benthic organisms (e.g. live coral) to protection.

Currently a total of eight MPAs are being monitored within Bohol, each with a control site situated just outside the MPA. There are 5 distant control sites that have been selected (see table and Map). This year's survey will include a newly established marine protected area. The site is located part of Lapulapu City in the province of Cebu.

Province	Municipality/City	MPA	Control Site
Bohol	Tubigon	(1) Bilangbilangan (2) Batasan	(C1) Canlangi
	Buenavista	(3) Asinan	(C2) Pandao
	Getafe	(4) Pandanon (5) Jandayan Norte (6) Handumon	(C3) Putik
	Bien Unido	(7) Pinamgo	(C4) Sag
	Carlos P.Garcia (CPG)	(8) Saguise: Bantiguian	(C5) Banbanon (new control site)
Cebu	Lapulapu City	(9)Minantaw Marine Park and Sanctuary	

PROJECT SEAHORSE FOUNDATION MPA LTM Survey Sites for Dry Season 2009



Application Time Line

We are seeking volunteers for both the Dry season 2009 surveys (fish, seahorse census, benthic and coral surveys) and for Wet season 2009 surveys (corals, benthic and seahorses).

Dry Season 2009 (March 1 - April 30)

Application Due – December 15, 2008

Interview (phone interview) conducted – December (3rd week) 2008

Notification to applicants - 1st week of January 2009

Start of Programme - March 1st, 2009

Wet Season 2009 (September 1 - October 31)

Application Due - May 15 2009 (application form)

Interview (phone interview) conducted – June 2009

Notification to applicants - 1st week of July 2009

Start of Programme - September 1, 2009

Donation Payment; 50% of the required donation should be paid in January (Dry Season) or July (Wet Season) after selected applicants have been notified, and the remainder at the beginning of participation in the programme.

Application Process

Please complete the application form and send to Lourdes Labrada, Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation, Philippines at l.labrada@projectseahorse.org.ph by the deadlines specified above.

Recommended texts

Indo-Pacific Coral Reef Field Guide by Allen, G. and Steene, R. (1999).
Marine Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef and South East Asia by Allen, G. (1997).

Diving/Scuba equipment

Dive gear

Mask & snorkel

Fins for booties (not socks)

Booties (for walking among mangroves and over coral rubble)

Full wetsuit (3 mm, protects against stinging jellyfish and sun)

Weight belt (Project Seahorse will provide weights)

Knife

SCUBA gear

Buoyancy compensation device (BCD)

Regulator with content gauge and depth gauge