

March 10th 2011 – Recruitment & Recovery Study

Over this past week Eco Koh Tao and Crystal Dive have teamed together with Marine Conservation Koh Tao and the Prince of Songkhla University to conduct a recruitment and recovery study of the corals and other benthic organisms on Koh Tao.



The aim of the project is to see how the corals are recruiting and how they recover from the difficult year that was 2010. Severe bleaching left widespread areas dead or distressed and with increasing climate change issues in the coming decades how corals manage and recover will be important to their continued health.



It is of increasing importance this year as it appears that the corals are unlikely to have spawned in two of the major spawning months, February & March this year as a result of recent disturbances,

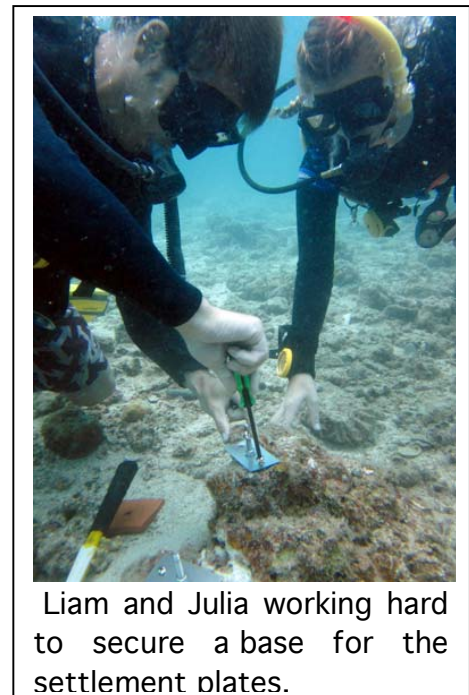
Of increasing importance is the connectivity of coral reefs and other marine ecosystems – seagrasses, mangroves – and how they intertwine to provide a healthy marine environment by supporting one another.

Over the course of the week we attended two sites – Hin Fai/Koh Tao Biorock and Sai Nuan – and placed 20 pairs of terracotta tiles into the substrata (usually dead coral skeleton).

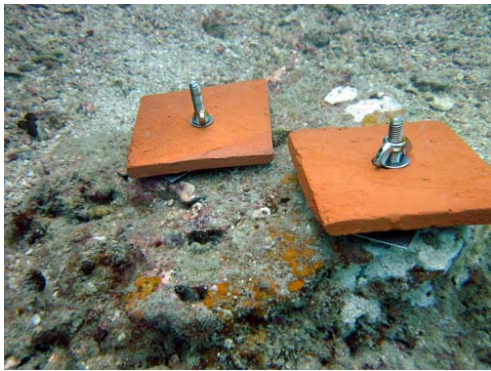
These tiles will remain in situ for 3 months and 12 months respectively. After the allotted time the settlement plates will be retrieved and the recruits (new corals that have settled) analysed to determine the coral types and species and possibly where they have migrated from. It may also give us some insight into the way corals move planktonic animals around Koh Tao.

It has been a big job getting each site set up but now that the base plates are secured the hard work is done as in future (thankfully!) all we'll have to do is change the terracotta plates and take photos of the surrounding areas to track changes to the coral community in the vicinity.

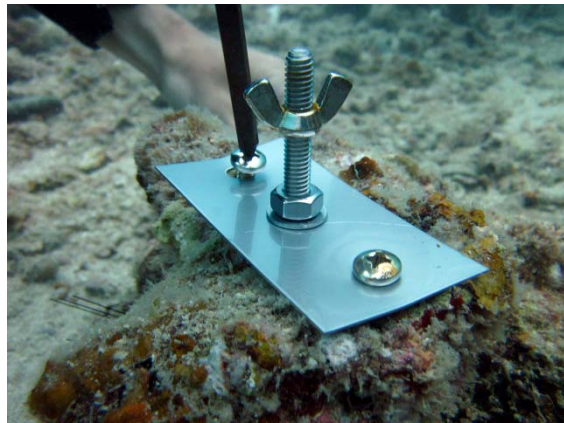
Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and effort (lots of it) for this project – Ecodivers Liam Bolitho, Julia Stewart & Petra Vasony.



It was great to have our resident Eco Warriors Simon & Jenny Dowling back on board.



A pair of secured settlement plates. The one on the left will be replaced every 3 months, while the one on the right will remain for 12 months.



Settlement plate bases were not the easiest things to secure.

Partner organisations in this project

Eco Koh Tao www.ecokohtao.com.html

Crystal Dive www.crystaldive.com

Marine Conservation Koh Tao www.marineconservationkohtao.com

Prince of Songkhla University

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