

The 2013 Guy Joseph Ocean Award Internship Report

Introduction

The Guy Joseph Ocean Award consists of a three-month internship held at Ocean Dive Centre, Embudu Finolhu, Maldives. It's aim was to offer a young Maldivian the chance to enhance their knowledge of the local marine environment and start a career in the scuba diving/marine conservation field. The candidate also completed the first two stages of the PADI diving certifications. He was introduced to basic coral ecology, fish identification techniques, survey methods and artificial coral gardening techniques. He worked as a key part of the team at the dive centre, ran snorkeling trips, tended to the artificial reef and held weekly marine talks for guests.

The Candidate



The successful candidate was Mohamed Hammadh who had just graduated from school and hoped to start a career in marine science. Hammadh was brought to the resort and taken for a dive to see how he integrated with the team and to check his medical status for diving. After successful completion of the interview he was offered the internship.

The Internship

Hammadh was given two weeks to familiarize himself with the working environment, including how to approach guests, give safety boat briefings, guide guests in the water and basic fish identification for our local reefs. He was eager and passionate about his role and we had several excellent comments from guests about his conduct. He proved to be a fast learner and quickly grasped the basics of coral reef ecology and the relevant environmental issues.

After the first month he gave his first presentation to guests, covering a range of marine environmental issues faced by the Maldives as well as some basic marine life identification. He was very nervous and slightly awkward at his first presentation however I have worked closely with him to improve his technique and he is getting better each time. After almost two months he is no longer nervous and gives the information to the guests in a relaxed and very professional manner.

One of Hammadh's main roles was to maintain and plant the artificial reef. He was taught how to clean and preserve the existing artificial reefs, how to look for signs of damage and how to start a new reef using coral from our nursery. He grasped the technique very quickly and is passionate about the project. For his internship report he has produced an overview of the project and how it is run.



The Future

We are very pleased with the way the internship has run. Hammadh is now much more confident in himself and enjoys his role. He also commented that he feels much healthier and stronger now that he is swimming every day. We have been very impressed with his performance and have offered him a six month paid job at the dive centre and the opportunity to complete the next stage of his diving course.

If a similar internship is run next year we would be interested in hosting two interns; this way they can share responsibilities and work as a team. Having two interns would also give them flexibility to complete their dive courses and conduct their scheduled guest activities. Next time we would like to include more theory on coral reefs and current marine issues, which would enhance the practical side of guiding snorkel trips and the presentations.

Conclusion

In summary the internship was a success; Hammadh has grown as a person and has learnt a great deal about his local environment. He hopes to go on to university to study marine science or engineering. He has also been introduced to the world of scuba diving, something he had never the chance to do. He is very keen to continue his diving career and maybe become a Divemaster.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Guy's Trust for involving us in their amazing work. It has been an absolute privilege to work alongside them and see someone's life improve and transform in such a positive way.