

## **MARINE SCIENCE MONTH CONCLUDES ON GUANA ISLAND, RESEARCH REVEALS BOTH TROUBLING AND HOPEFUL TRENDS FOR BVI MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

*Summer research by world-class scientists continues decades-long commitment to data-based environmental protection*

Research scientists and vacationers don't normally cross paths in the world's most exclusive resort hotels. But during the month of August, the Guana Island Hotel invites scientific teams to investigate marine ecology around the island. While vacationers spend their days finding peace and beauty, Guana's marine scientists are underwater, focusing intently on fragments of endangered corals they have secured to the skeletons of decimated reefs or surveying populations of large edible snails remaining in refuges on the roughest rocky shores. One team of Guana's scientists is busiest in the water after dark, setting up experiments designed to understand the lives of blood-sucking parasites that burrow under the scales of sleeping fish.

Marine research is part of Guana Science, a consortium of international scientists in partnership with the Guana Island Hotel. Guana Science supports scientific and educational projects that aim to understand and protect biodiversity, to lend expertise and technical support for environmental management in the BVI, and to contribute to scientific advancement worldwide.

Ongoing investigations into marine ecology conservation on Guana include:

- Developing and testing technology for restoring endangered coral species to shallow Caribbean reefs, with simple and inexpensive methods that can be used by volunteer groups.
- Investigating shifts in the habitat preferences of fish species whose territories and survival are tied to the availability of

certain corals, which are declining in the face of global climate change and local human impacts.

- Studying the parasites that attack fish at night on coral reefs and the fish that leave the reefs to avoid such parasites.
- Gathering data on whelk populations, such as growth rates and home ranges, that are needed by people responsible for sustainably managing the local whelk fishery.
- Building a long-term data set, now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, that inventories marine life and tracks population changes on Guana's coral reefs. This data set now represents the only standardized long-term record of coral reef condition (and declines) in the BVI.

“By facilitating scientific research, Guana Island makes a real contribution to global understanding of coral reef ecology. Guana Science contributes data that generate scientific insights and ultimately enhance human capacity to manage and protect tropical marine ecosystems. We are grateful for the support of the Guana Island Hotel, the scientists we work with, and the entire BVI community,” said Dr. Lianna Jarecki, director of Guana Science.