

Reef Check Malaysia

(783440-X)

Box # 606, Unit 5.19 – 5.22, Wisma Central, Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
03 2161 5948

wecare@reefcheck.org.my

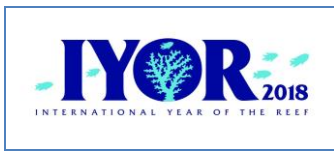
March beach clean-up in Malaysia

RCM will kick off its IYOR 2018 programme with a beach clean-up on the 3rd of March 2018. This clean-up effort will be conducted with several of our partners in 10 different locations. This effort is to highlight the issue of marine debris, specifically plastic waste, which represents a serious threat to marine ecosystems. Recent photos from Tioman and Mantanani islands clearly demonstrate the need for action.

IYOR 2018 aims to strengthen global awareness of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, promote partnerships and share information between stakeholders for the sustainable management of coral reefs, as well as identify and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems. This is in line with RCM's current efforts in Malaysia, which focus on helping stakeholders to implement sustainable coral reef management. IYOR 2018 provides an opportunity to extend efforts to raise awareness among Malaysians about the value and importance of coral reefs, the threats they face and what we can all do to contribute to reef conservation.

We have decided to focus on marine debris this year, as we are seeing alarming amounts of plastic and other trash on beaches around Malaysia. This affects tourism – a major industry in Malaysia, as well as impacting marine mammals and food security. The problem is not local, and will need concerted efforts from all parties to come up with sustainable solutions. We are talking to drinks companies, packaging manufacturers, resort and dive operators – but ultimately solving the problem will need government participation.

RCM had almost given up on doing beach clean-up programmes, except where they contribute to our long term programmes in Tioman, Sibul and Mantanani. We weren't solving the problem at source – which is to improve waste management in a general sense including reducing litter, catching trash before it reaches the ocean, improving recycling, etc. We had heard about additives



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that can make plastic oxo-biodegradable (though it is not suitable in all cases) and have tried contacting plastic packaging users and suppliers in an attempt to start a dialogue.

After this clean-up in March, we will follow up with media coverage and lobbying to relevant government agencies, using the data and the combined voices of all participants – including our corporate friends from Coca Cola and F&N. The next clean-up will be in September in conjunction with the International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) Day. We hope that these efforts will help to not only raise awareness on this issue but also kick start a series of actions by all relevant stakeholders to address the problem of plastic waste and marine debris in Malaysia.