

26th March 2022



# REEF GUARDIAN

**Dear Blue Voice,**

We would like to thank you once again for becoming Reef Guardians! Your section of restored reef called the Hillock-1 can be found at the coordinates 11.48250 N, 092.70706 E, off the village of Chidiyatapu, South Andaman Island. Here is an update with the latest pictures of your reef and some of its recent inhabitants. We hope you enjoy your update!



The Andaman Islands were partially locked down yet again in the month of January due to another covid outbreak in the country, but fortunately, we could continue to work on the reef through this period. The mineral accretion device has been running smoothly this year with an uninterrupted flow since the start of the season. In February we conducted the second round of monitoring and are in the process of analyzing the data collected. A handful of coral fragments were eaten by grazing Bumphead parrotfish which are a common occurrence at this time of the year. However due to the growing resilience of the artificial reef and the added support of the mineral accretion device, the coral seems to be recovering quickly on its own. On the left are some recent pictures of the Hillock-1 and its coral fragments.



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Corals are one of few animals in the natural world that use both sexual and asexual reproduction. Their life cycle starts off with mature coral in a reef synchronously releasing egg and sperm bundles in a mass spawning event, that takes place only once a year. The bundles are enclosed in a fatty substance and therefore, float to the surface where the eggs get fertilized. In just a few hours they begin forming a planula (coral larva) that drifts on the surface for up to a month. The planulae eventually sink to the ocean floor where they attach to a hard surface and turn into a coral polyp. The polyp will then grow, divide and make exact genetic copies of itself in a process called 'budding'. This is the asexual method of reproduction used by coral to grow into a mature colony, which takes 3 to 5 years then allowing it to participate in the spawning event.

Pictured on the right are two new inhabitants of the Hillock-1 - Juvenile Bluefin Trevally and the Christmas Tree Worm. Bluefin Trevallies are fast swimming predators that hunt in schools over coral reefs when young. Their iridescent blue colouration makes them beautiful but deadly ambush hunters. It's always a party where the Christmas tree worms live! These tube dwelling polychaete worms have colourful spiral feathery tentacles that help them filter feed on micro-organisms in the water column.



With the world finally starting to turn a new leaf post this pandemic, we sincerely hope you get a chance to experience the beauty of our coral reefs once again. As always, we would love to host you here in the Andamans, if you do decide to come over. On behalf of the entire ReefWatch staff, we would like to wish you good health and prosperity! If you have any questions regarding the artificial reef or any of the work we do, please feel free to email us at [admin@reefwatchindia.org](mailto:admin@reefwatchindia.org).

We hope you enjoyed this update!

Warmly,

*Angustava Jain*



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