Reef Check Italia *onlus*, a network to improve civil participation in marine environment assessment

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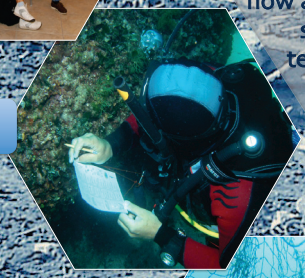
The involvement of "citizens" (whether members of the general public or dedicated volunteers) to undertake data collection for regional-scale scientific studies is a key tool to achieve shared decisions in the field of biological conservation. Reef Check Italia *onlus* is applying fast and effective protocols since 2008 involving both young students and recreational divers, to collect data on abundance and distribution of target species, along beaches and underwater.

Discover & Wonder

Learn & Understand

Act & Share

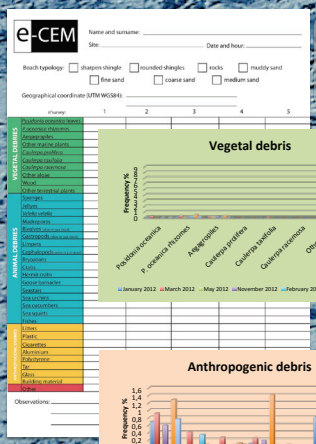


www.malibufoundation.org

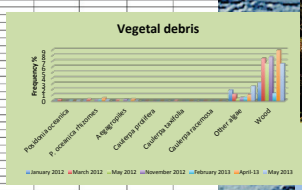
Think & Change

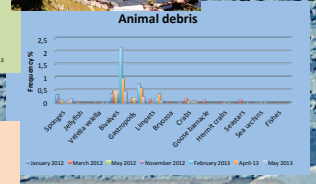
A vertical project, developed from 2011 to 2013 at La Spezia (Italy), has unveiled marine life to about 1000 students through well focused hands on experiences both in the lab and in the field. Reef Check's protocol is feeding a wide open dataset, accessible via its website, containing information on vegetal debris, animals and litter washed ashore. These activities are often carried out in collaboration with Marine Protected Areas and represent an effective way to introduce young people to boost environmental awareness.

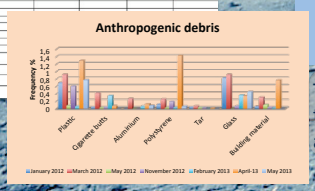
More than 500 volunteer divers, specifically trained, day by day are building a georeferred map for more than 40 species, a unique source of information for the Mediterranean Sea. Volunteers report the abundance of target species that have been selected according to ecological importance, level of protection, and vulnerability to climate change. The strength of the project is in the huge amount of data that have been gathered until now and in the possibility of long-term implementation also in the absence of external funding.

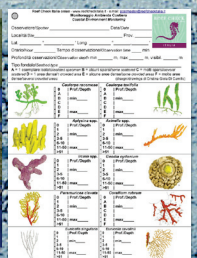
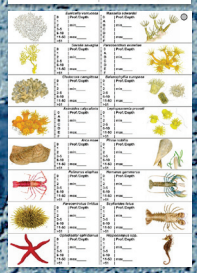


Standard table adopted for beach surveys using a 50x50 cm² frame with 25 subquadrats.
At least five replicates per student are required







Trends of seasonal surveys of the three categories of debris at Baia Blu

Data provided by diver volunteers along Mediterranean coasts looking for the abundance of target species