

Dive to Protect

The Musandam Coral Reefs – a Marine Protected Area

Pioneering work by an international wildlife conservation organisation looks set to help start the process of getting a remote part of Oman declared a Marine Protected Area.

Biosphere Expeditions has just completed the baseline research of the coral reefs off the remote and mountainous Musandam peninsula of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz.

This is the first time this area has been surveyed, bordered as it is by massive developments in the United Arab Emirates. This high level of construction is believed to have had a considerable negative impact on the marine environment of the neighbouring area. However, the results of the first survey which have just been released are encouraging.

“We discovered corals here that appear to endure extremely hard conditions, and a higher abundance of snappers than in any other part of the region,” said Kathy Wilden from Biosphere Expeditions.

“While this is only the beginning, and we will be returning to the area later this year, it is a start to building a case at government level for this to be declared a Marine Protected Area. It is important we act now to protect the area as development in the region will increase.”

The announcement from Biosphere Expeditions comes hot on the heels of the call by world renowned



Oceanographer and 2009 TED prize winner, Dr Sylvia Earle, to establish a global network of marine protected areas which she describes as ‘hope spots to save and restore the blue heart of the planet’. Currently, less than one percent of the oceans are under legal protection.

“There is no doubt Sylvia Earle’s speech has put the whole question of marine conservation higher up the agenda,” said Kathy Wilden. “The marine environment is very fragile and if not protected will be gone forever.”

Ordinary people can come along and help collect vital data. Volunteers from all over the world will be working alongside local scientists to gather information about this currently unprotected underwater environment. More information can be found at: www.biosphere-expeditions.org/musandam

The research was carried out between 18 and 31 October 2009. The survey was undertaken using the Reef Check methodology in 18 dive sites, at two different depths.

About Biosphere Expeditions:

Biosphere Expeditions inspires and supports critical wildlife conservation around the world. It increases the effort and funding that goes into conservation by providing the opportunity for ordinary people to work and contribute to field research in many locations across the globe. Biosphere Expeditions is committed to protecting endangered species and habitats by forging alliances between scientists and the public. In 2010, Biosphere Expeditions is working in partnership with the United Nations in its ‘International Year of Biodiversity’ programme to increase the public awareness of the importance of conserving our planet’s biological diversity.

