

Noo Raajje Programme Begins Second Expedition to Explore Maldives' Coral Reefs

MALE', CA, MALDIVES, March 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Noo Raajje](#), a collaboration between the Government of Maldives and the [Blue Prosperity Coalition](#), begins its second scientific expedition to explore and study the country's ocean and coral reefs.

A team of researchers from the United States, as well as Maldivian scientists from the [Maldives Marine Research Institute](#), will set sail from Male' on a 22 day scientific voyage, making stops at north and south Male' atolls before proceeding to the south of the country.



Divers entering the water in North Male', March 2021. Photo by Kyle Roepke

The expedition will survey the health of coral reef habitats and fish populations, with a particular focus on Huvadho, Fuvahmulah, Addu, and North and South Male' Atoll. Research methods employed by the scientists include scuba diving surveys that will study fish populations, coral reef health to better understand the composition and health of nearshore marine habitats as well as water quality samples and baited underwater cameras to gather information on larger species like sharks and turtles. Noo Raajje has chartered the local safari boat Carpe Novo for the expedition.

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*Shafiya Naeem, Director
General of the Maldives
Marine Research Institute*

The first expedition, in January 2020, surveyed 16 atolls, primarily in the central and northern parts of the Maldives. The findings from the first expedition will be released in a

report available to the public in early April. Together, the two expeditions will form the first ever archipelago-wide assessment of ocean health in the Maldives.

The data collected on the expeditions will inform policymakers on ways to sustainably manage

fisheries, boost incomes, and improve ocean health across the archipelago.

Once the expedition is complete, the analyzed data will inform the Government and Noo Raajje partners in their marine spatial planning efforts, helping preserve important fish stocks, ensure sustainable tourism practices, and safeguard ocean health.

Adam Ziyad, Director General of the Fisheries department, Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture commented, “Policies formulated on solid scientific evidence and backed by research is essential for effective fisheries management. The information that comes out from these scientific expeditions will be crucial in our next steps towards strengthening the fisheries management framework and for realizing our vision of sustainable fisheries management.”

“This expedition will complete the first archipelago wide survey of Maldivian coral reefs. It is exciting to gain such a broad snapshot of coral reef health and to know this data will be used to support the Maldives in their Marine Spatial Planning process.” said Andy Estep, Science Director at the Waitt Institute, a partner in the Noo Raajje programme.

“Once we complete these final legs of the expedition, we will have surveyed sites in every atoll. This will bring value to the work being done to assess the status of our reefs, and will provide useful insight into identifying potential new sites to expand our ongoing monitoring work. The expedition surveys also fall within the spawning window for corals in Maldivian waters, and our research team is excited to capture some key information on those events.” said Shafiya Naeem, Director General leading the Maldives Marine Research Institute.

Given the ongoing pandemic mandatory quarantines were in place for scientists and crews before boarding the ship, and the expedition is being conducted under strict COVID-19 safety



Diver on coral reef survey, March 2021. Photo by Joe Lepore.



A school of fish on a Maldivian reef, March 2021. Photo by Joe Lepore

protocols to ensure the safety of participants and surrounding communities. The boat and visiting scientists will have no contact with Maldivian communities.

Noo Raajje is a 5-year program led by the Government of the Maldives and the Blue Prosperity Coalition to protect the ocean and its resources to build a bright future for communities, the economy, and the environment. In the Maldives, the program is led by the President's Office and the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, and in partnership with staff from the Maldives Marine Research Institute. Members of the Blue Prosperity Coalition include the Waitt Institute, National Geographic Pristine Seas, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

To follow the expedition, follow @NooRaajje on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and follow the hashtag #KanduFalhuDhiraasaa and #NooRaajje for all program related work. For more information about the program visit nooraajje.org

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