



Watch Out! The Coral Reef Exhibit is a hostile environment

PROJECT NAME: Aquaria testing plastic decay in the Coral Reef Exhibit: the Coral Finder put to test. Reef HQ Aquarium Coral Reef Exhibit used to test material resistance to hostile marine environment.

PROJECT DATES: January – June 2013.

PROJECT LEADER: Russell Kelley. Coral Identification Capacity Building Program (CICBP).

PROJECT FOCUS: The Coral Finder is a new tool for motivated individuals to identify corals - underwater. It is essentially an underwater book designed to allow non-specialists to identify coral species easily, just by looking at them and without prior scientific knowledge.

The tropical marine environment is very hostile and the guide needed a robust print material. This program of durability testing at Reef HQ Aquarium provides data to guide the choice of the page material used by the manufacturer for future editions of the Coral Finder. This experiment will also benefit the forthcoming Reef Finder, a similar user-friendly tool to identify all creatures living in a tropical reef environment.

Reef HQ Aquarium provided the ideal setting to host this simple durability test and pages printed on the proposed polypropylene stock were attached to tank access ladders for several months during 2013. This ensured an accelerated repetition of exposures to seawater and air, swash action and UV light. Reef HQ Aquarium provided a fast-track hostile environment to test the page material, equivalent to many years of use. Regular inspection by Reef HQ Aquarium staff provided insight on the wear and tear endured by the samples and allowed comparing different material options.



Above is an example of the wear and tear to the Coral Finder after several months of intense exposure in the Reef HQ Aquarium Coral Reef Exhibit: The left image demonstrates the result of intense wear and tear during testing, the right image demonstrates the Coral Finder in use by divers in the field. © Russell Kelley (CICBP).

PROJECT OUTCOMES: Results from this project contributed to the publication of: Kelley, R. "Indo Pacific Coral Finder." See www.byoguides.com (2009).

