



EXPEDITION PROFILE

February 9th, 2020 aboard DISCOVERY Yacht Julia

On February 9th, 2020, SeaKeepers partnered with Miami Waterkeeper to host a floating classroom and island cleanup aboard Fleet Miami's Julia. 18 Miami Waterkeeper Junior Ambassadors learned about our local marine environment by going out on a field expedition to conduct water quality assessments and learn more about the threats to Biscayne Bay.

The Miami Waterkeeper Junior Ambassador program is a year-long program that develops a cohort of high school students into young environmental leaders. Through the Junior Ambassador program, South Florida students become community leaders by gaining an understanding of issues impacting Biscayne Bay and the surrounding watershed, receiving training in civic engagement and advocacy, sharing their acquired knowledge with diverse audiences, and helping to organize interactive volunteer events. This program helps students become versed in the complex relationship between social, environmental, governmental, and economic issues that are central to cultivating a culture of environmental awareness and advocacy in South Florida, which is relevant worldwide.

One of our first stops after leaving Pelican Harbor was at the mouth of the Little River, because this river is notorious for poor water quality. This exercise showed how their actions on land have a direct effect on what goes into the Bay. During the water quality testing, we took pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and temperature measurements to better understand what is happening in the water. These measurements can point to possible water quality issues like algae blooms, sediment in the water, chemical leaks, and anoxic environments (caused by high algae numbers). After testing water quality, we headed to Pelican Island to conduct a coastal cleanup and understand the effects of plastics on the local fauna. We learned about coastal restoration and invasive species and how all of this on top of poor water quality is decreasing the health of Biscayne Bay. The students all left with a sense of how to help minimize their own impact on the Bay.

Thank you to Miami Waterkeeper for hosting their first floating classroom program with SeaKeepers and to Fleet Miami for providing Julia as a platform for our floating classroom programs! We look forward to expanding our partnerships with local schools and organizations to conserve our local beaches and waters.

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