



EXPEDITION PROFILE

February 12th, 2021 aboard DISCOVERY Yacht Isabel

The International SeaKeepers Society assisted The Surfrider Foundation and Conservation Key in conducting field research at the RJ's Ledge reef aboard DISCOVERY Yacht Isabel, a 38' 1973 Bertram sport fisher. Surfrider's Regional Manager for Florida and Puerto Rico, Marilu Flores, and volunteer Ryan Darling again utilized a commercial grade submersible drone/ROV (in this case, a Trident underwater drone from Sofar Ocean) to do coral reef surveys. The surveys are being done for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to document any signs of coral bleaching, disease, or degradation in reefs just off the south Florida coast; specifically offshore of Miami. This type of citizen science initiative is crucial as the State does not always have the resources needed to gather the data that in turn influences policy.

Marilu is also the founder of a non-profit called Conservation Key, which were actually the recipients of the above mentioned drone (certain non-profits can apply to receive a gifted SoFar Trident ROV). Ultimately, Conservation Key would like to gather more and more video footage data like this, and have it be openly available to all who can benefit from it.

Further analysis needs to be done, but there may have been some sightings in the footage of zooxanthellae algae on some of the corals, which is a sign of coral bleaching. Marilu and other volunteers plan to head out to about five other reefs in the coming months. Last but not least, a crucial part of the success of this outing is due to the expertise of captain Till Koerber to get the team out to the survey site and returned safely.

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