

Dive shops join Bonaire's restoration project

At a time when responsible and sustainable tourism are greatly valued, Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire (RRFB) is happy to welcome **Divi Dive Bonaire** and **VIP Diving** to their list of supporting dive shops.

These two new dive operators will educate visitors and residents who want to learn more about coral reefs and reef restoration. Through organizing events, giving presentations and training volunteer divers, they will serve an essential role in encouraging the public to become involved in the Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire's project.

"We, at VIP Diving, had the privilege to team up with Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire and are proud and honored to be part of this endeavor. We are excited to participate in renewing the reef with our staff and dive guests. The corals give us so much joy, and now we have the opportunity to give some love back to the ocean. Together we can and will make a difference, and we will do our utmost to share our passion for ocean conservation, said Pascal Van Empelen, VIP Diving Operations Manager.

As part of RRFB first phase, two nurseries with three trees each were installed in the shallow waters at Calabas Reef, accessible from shore for divers and snorkelers. The nurseries will have an initial capacity of 600 corals. Both critically endangered staghorn and elkhorn coral species are being hosted and propagated in the nurseries. The coral nurseries will be maintained by Divi Dive Bonaire and VIP Diving. Once the staff complete their training, the dive shops will have the opportunity to attract visitors to participate in the coral restoration experience. This can shape a tourists relationship with the marine environment and foster global stewardship for coral reef ecosystem.

"Any action taken, whether it be large or small, can help", explains Celine Van Meer, General Manager, Divi Flamingo Beach Resort & Casino. "Our entire team is excited to take action now, to help ensure sustainability for the future, as climate change, among other fac-



tors, continues to have an impact on our oceans and marine life."

RRFB, which started with a small group of local individuals, confirms its grassroots approach. They focus on actively involving the community in the coral restoration program, that is key to protect and preserve Bonaire's marine ecosystems in a sustainable way.

Bonaire dive shops supporting RRFB for several years are Beyond the Corals, Buddy Dive Resort, Great Adventures Bonaire, Tropical Divers and Wannadive.

Through large-scale propagation, outplanting, and monitoring of genetically diverse corals, Reef Renewal Bonaire works to assist natural recovery of coral reefs. To learn more about how to get involved or lend support, visit reefnewalbonaire.org or email info@reefnewalbonaire.org.

Planting one of the trees are Divi Dive staff members Denise Glazer and Laurel Kjorlien with Guillermo Alcorta supervising for RRFB in background.



Trees are ready to be placed underwater: RRFB assistant coordinator Sanne Tuiten, VIP staff Pascal van Empelen and Christa Burger and RRFB coordinator Francesca Virdis



Tropical Nature is open Mon-Sat 10 to 6 nonstop in Lourdes Shopping Mall. Appointments: WhatsApp 7708911 or on the Tropical Nature Facebook page.



Annual Parrot Roost Count
January 30, 2021

Our thanks to Susan Davis of Infobonaire.com for the use of the chart, COVID-19 Measures, Phase 4, that we published last issue.



Divi staff assemble the trees: Denise Glazer, Ruud Janssen, Laurel Kjorlien and Malin Kaijser. Photos: Reef Restoration