

Project Update: June 2015

We were able to successfully set up the underwater experiments to measure grazing by sea urchins and fish at four locations in the central Galapagos Islands. We also have developed baseline data for fish diversity and abundance at 12 different sites throughout the archipelago, and will be revisiting these sites in the coming months and again later in the year to monitor the effects of the [El Niño](#) event that is currently developing.

-Here is the link if you would like to add it to the webpage directly-

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.html



So attached are a couple of pictures from the Galapagos. The first image is of me installing herbivore exclusion cages underwater. The goal of this study is to determine how sea urchin and fish herbivores affect ecosystem functioning in the rocky subtidal reefs of the Galapagos. Oceanographic conditions such as wave energy and temperature change with El Niño cycles and can dictate how these consumers determine the productivity and diversity of the ecosystem. The picture was taken by my good friend and dive buddy

Maximilian Hirschfeld (<http://www.enphocus.net/>).

The second picture is of me leading a high school field course on marine biology at the Charles Darwin Foundation in Galapagos. These students from the Tomás de Berlanga high school came to learn about basic marine biology and I took them snorkeling and looking for critters in the bay outside the station. It was surprising that some of them, who have lived on Santa Cruz Island all their lives, had never seen the underwater world of the Galapagos before!



Finally one of my advisor, Jon Witman (Professor, Brown University) and I aboard the R/V Valeska gearing up for a dive.

The project is going very well, we are about to head back to the Galapagos after presenting at the Rufford Regional Conference (South America) in Chile last week. I will send another email with some pictures from that wonderful encounter!

