

Project Update: June 2016

Of the 10 reef sites visited in April 2015 during a pilot survey, we chose four sites to intensively examine for seasonal variation in sediment load and reef composition. For assistance with field logistics, we approached and received complete support from a local dive centre – DIVEIndia - on Havelock Island (SCUBA tanks, boat travel and dive buddies). Sediment and benthic surveys in each of the four study sites were conducted in five sessions between December 2015 and May 2016. As a result of our intensive monitoring, in the second week of May, we witnessed another mass coral bleaching event, recording surface water temperatures as high as $\sim 34^{\circ}\text{C}$. In the last phase of our project, along with our proposed analysis, we will study the potential role of sediments in influencing the extent of coral bleaching and subsequent damage - an opportunity that was missed during past bleaching events and therefore a novel and important assessment for the reefs of the Andamans.



Coral reef bleaching observed in all our study sites in May 2016



Left: A sediment trap deployed at one of the study sites. Right: Saw Darrick from DIVEIndia deploying a light data logger.