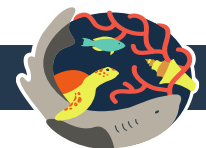


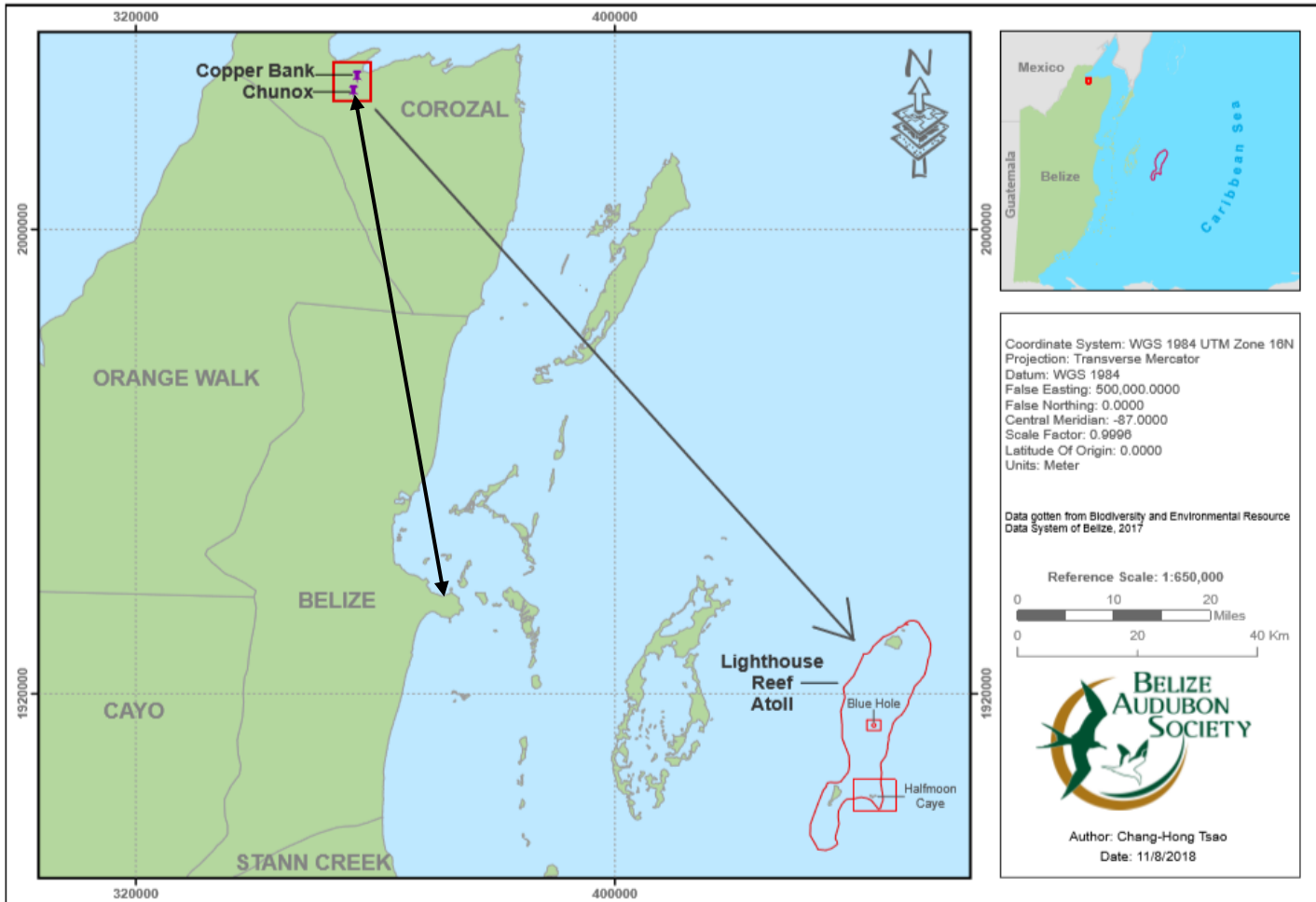


**Inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders**

Presented by Ms. Dareece Chuc  
Environmental Education and Communications Director



## Project Location



Target- High school 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> form students

### Goal

Raising awareness on marine protected areas through the implementation of a conservation-based, out-of-school educational program for youths.

1. To raise awareness about marine protected areas and their role in natural resources management and sustaining livelihoods

2. To developed leadership skills through mentoring and fostering stewardship

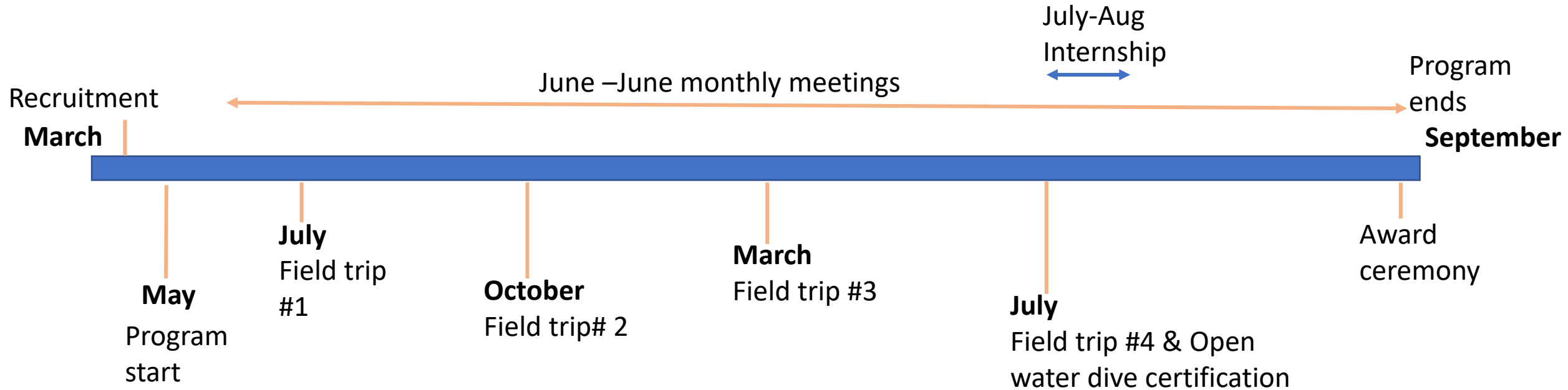
3. To introduce and provide practical experience in marine research and monitoring methodologies



# Programme Implementation

## 18 Months Model

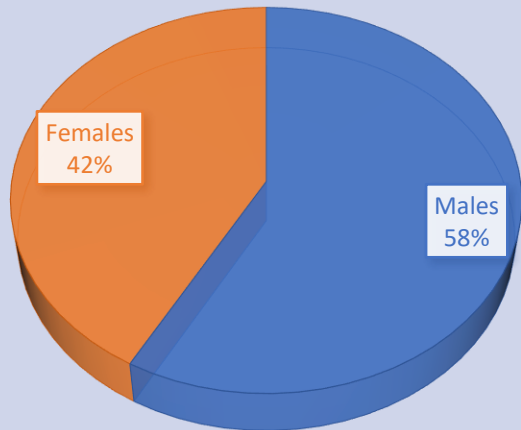
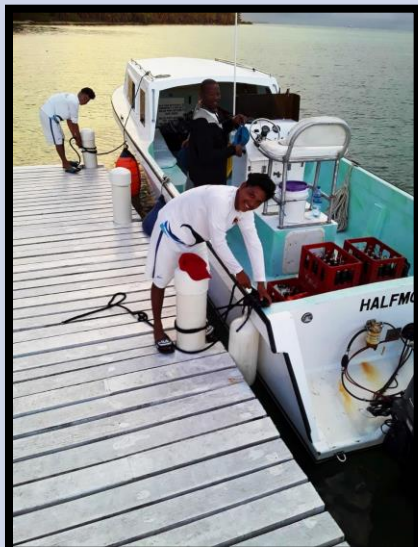
Program started in 2014

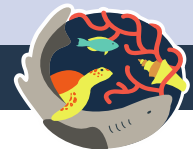


Note an estimated investment effort BZ\$ 60K over 18 months

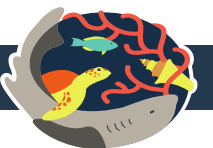


## Measuring success

Total # of students participating between 2014-2022	Where are the participants now?	Outcomes						
<p>Since the program was initiated in 2014, <b>43</b> youths have been educated on the importance of marine protected areas, marine ecosystems, life skills &amp; leadership and have been exposed to conservation careers.</p> <p><b>MALE VERSES FEMALE</b></p>  <table><tr><th>Gender</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>Males</td><td>58%</td></tr><tr><td>Females</td><td>42%</td></tr></table>	Gender	Percentage	Males	58%	Females	42%	<p>✓60% of participants move on to higher education and are employed in non-fishing careers.</p> <p>✓18% have gone into fishing</p> <p>✓2% employed in direct conservation work</p> <p>✓10% unknown</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The youths who participated in the program are now more conscious of their role in protecting marine resources and possible careers they can pursue in the marine science field.</li><li>• 12 participants are open water dive certified and have basic research and monitoring skills making them easier to transition into conservation careers.</li><li>• Program has a defined structure via a program manual (2021)</li></ul>
Gender	Percentage							
Males	58%							
Females	42%							









# Challenges

- Logistically BAS staff is far from the participants. Requires more time and resources to implement activities from afar.
- Participants become empowered and eager to apply their knowledge/skills but often have limited opportunities to become employed or actively involved in conservation work.
- Responsibility (Liability) of the youths in our care
- Language\* (Spanish is the preferred Language)



# What's next?

## Inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders

by Dareece Chuc

Remember that group of 16 excited high schoolers you met back in July 2019 in our 'Meet the Reef Protectors' feature?

Last July, they were immersed into the world of marine conservation through an educational field trip to Half Moon Caye and Blue Hole Natural Monuments, and our work with these excited teens has continued over the past year.

On February 29th, a one-day workshop on the topic 'Introduction to Marine Research and Monitoring' was carried out by the BAS science team, with a special presentation from MarAlliance's education coordinator Jamal Andrewin and field outreach officer Hilmar Salazar on marine megafauna monitoring at Lighthouse Reef Atoll.

The workshop covered core topics such as the importance of biophysical monitoring



(especially for commercial fisheries species); where does the data go and what is it used for; and a comprehensive review of common fish and coral species found in Belize. In addition, the workshop was used to assess the knowledge gained by the participants over previous six months of the program. Methods used included question and answer sessions, games, presentations and group assignments.

The workshop in February laid the foundation for the Reef Protectors' 3rd field trip of the 18-month program on March 7th-9th. This time they travelled all the way from their homes in Northern Belize (Sartenjea, Chunux and Copper Bank villages) to Laughing Bird Caye National Park, in Southern Belize.

Along the journey they stopped for quick tour at St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park and spent their nights at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS) en route to Placencia. Being at CBWS in the evenings provided the perfect opportunity to emphasize the 'ridge to reef' approach to conservation with the group. As a result, two presentations were arranged for their benefit.

The first presentation was given by the team from Fragments of Hope, to enhance the group's coral identification knowledge and prepare them for their trip to Laughing

Bird Caye the following day. Lisa Carne of Fragments of Hope shared some of the remarkable success stories of coral planting in Belize and the world, as well as their contribution to building local capacity in coral reef restoration in Belize.

On thesecond evening, park ranger Emmanuel Saqui provided an excellent overview of the ongoing jaguar and bird monitoring activities at CBWS and the importance of monitoring wildlife for conservation.

Though the weekend turned out to be wetter than expected due to a passing cold front, the objectives of the field trip were still achieved after some tweaking of logistics. The group were still able to spend a few hours snorkeling the coral nurseries and gardens around Laughing Bird Caye, and got some much-needed time practicing fish and coral identification and in-water skills.

In our efforts to provide useful and life changing experiences to participants of this program, we often facilitate positive

interaction with conservation leaders. This, we hope, will contribute to creating beneficial life skills, inspire appreciation for conservation and a desire to serve one's community.

One of the stops along the journey to Laughing Bird Caye led us to Placencia's very own activist Ms. Monique Vernon, who is making waves of her own in conservation. She shared her story and passion for conservation and took the group to see her sea animal-inspired garbage bin project. These bins are placed on the beach and in strategic locations around Placencia to encourage visitors and locals to deposit their plastic bottles/garbage in a fun but appropriate place.

Following our final meeting with the Reef Protectors, in July, we will be offering six of the students the chance to undertake a PADI Open Water dive certification and a summer internship at HMC in August and September. It is after all through meaningful life experiences that we hope to achieve our goal of creating the next generation of conservation leaders.



- Develop “engagement plan” appealing to participants beyond the life of the program
- Launch a Junior Reef Protectors program with primary school children in targeted communities

If resources are available to continue to run the program, there is high expectations that youths from fishing families would engage in career options other than fishing & become environmental stewards...



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Since its formation in 1969 the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) has been Belize's foremost environmental organization protecting Belize's precious natural resources.

