

## eco<sub>2</sub> receives funding to monitor the health of the region's reefs

eco<sub>2</sub> is to conduct an ongoing reef monitoring project in the Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP) and surrounding area. With first phase funding provided by the British High Commission, the monitoring is designed to provide baseline data about local reefs, and to begin gathering information to assess the effects of coral bleaching, coral diseases and Crown-of-Thorns starfish infestations on our local reefs.

Research efforts will focus on monitoring ten sites in four areas within the MBREMP and Mikindani Bay, and on developing capacity for Marine Park staff to conduct monitoring. Later phases will expand the number of monitored areas to 15 and include training of community environmental officers in snorkel survey techniques.



*Black pyramid butterflyfish, Mikindani Bay*

establishing a schools environmental clubs network, organising educational visits to the Marine Park for school children, and by developing teachers' training packs.

Dr. Martin Guard, director of eco<sub>2</sub>, says, "Ultimately we hope to be able to create a marine research station here in southern Tanzania that will enable scientists to conduct more focussed research into marine resource usage and the effects of disturbance on the marine environment."

MBREMP is Tanzania's newest Marine Park and was created in June 2000 following recognition of the high levels of biodiversity in the region. With an area of 650km<sup>2</sup>, the park includes marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats and has areas of highly productive and undisturbed ecosystems such as estuary, coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests.



**British High Commission  
Tanzania**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

eco<sub>2</sub> has joined with Ten Degrees South and the Old Boma Hotel to offer customers eco<sub>2</sub> breaks – a package of accommodation and diving that can be booked in advance at discounted prices. Details are available on our website in the [accommodation section](#).



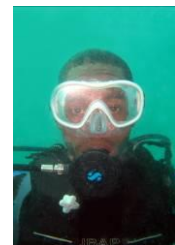
Last May saw Nick and Neil, from the Old Boma, completing their Open Water course, and next month Paul and Russel, also from the Boma, and Yvie from Mikindani's schools' Breakfast Club, are planning to take the plunge. Welcome to Mikindani to our new recruits and well done to those who've already completed the course.



Recently we took our boat staff out to experience the underwater world. Juma and Imamu, who make all of our dives possible by getting us to the dive site and helping with our gear, came to find out why we're doing it. I think that's two more divers in the making.



*Imamu*



*Juma*



## Humpbacks return

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August eco<sub>2</sub> customers were thrilled to see the first Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) of the season in Mikindani Bay. Returning from a dive, we spotted an adult and calf, and the calf duly obliged with a full display of playful behaviour.

Humpback whales spend summer in the cold waters of the Antarctic where they feed on krill, anchovies, sardine and mackerel, before heading north to warmer waters for the breeding season (August – October). They travel in families, and once the pregnant females have calved, they are ready to mate. The males compete for females by lunging and bashing into one another, and have a haunting song that is often heard on dives in the breeding season.

Whales calf every 2-4 years, and the calves are about 2m in length at birth – adults can be up to 15m and weigh 40 tonnes. They remain in the warm waters of the breeding area until the calves are strong enough to return to the colder, more productive waters of the Antarctic where they can feed.



*Humpback whale in Mikindani Bay*

returning with a big splash. The reasons for this behaviour are not fully understood, but it may be part of displays, attempts to remove parasites, or just play. They are known to dive up to 210m and can stay under for up to 30 minutes, but usually return after about 15.

Throughout the breeding season, whales travel all along the coast of Tanzania, and each year, Samaki Consultants, in Dar es Salaam, collect data on sightings. This year, regular whale watch days are being organised to track individual whales and groups as they move along the coast. To get more involved in these efforts or to report sightings contact: [samaki-info@hotmail.com](mailto:samaki-info@hotmail.com).

Last year 102 sightings of 403 Humpback whales were logged, from 16 locations, with 23 mother and calf sightings.

If you see whales while out on the water, remember that a whale's contact zone is considered to be 300m, after which motorised boats should travel at no-wake speeds and go no closer than 100m, never crossing their path, in front or behind.

If you manage to get photos, especially tail shots, they may help to track individual whales in the area, so please send a copy to the above e-mail with information about the sighting.

*This story is based on information from Samaki Consultancy's Whale watch newsletter.*

Whales can be curious and playful, indulging in tail slapping; spy-hopping – popping their heads above the water; pectoral fluke waving; and most impressively, breaching – raising their entire body above the surface and

## August whale watch

On 16<sup>th</sup> August local NGO workers from Mikindani, including staff from Trade Aid, EdUKaid and Breakfast Club, joined us to take part in the Synchronised Whale Watching day organised by Samaki Consultants in Dar es Salaam. Despite seeing whales several times earlier in the week, the whales didn't make an appearance on the day. Perhaps because it was quite a windy day, a fact that left some of our watchers wetter than others – yes there is always a dry side on the boat, and it changes on the way back!

## Special species

The Tanzanian winter has seen a return of Leaf scorpionfish (*Taenianotus triacanthus*) to the more regular sightings on our Special Species Watch lists, perhaps they like the colder water!

Camouflaged to look strikingly like a leaf, they rock gently from side to side as they wait for prey to pass close. They exist in different colours, but these vivid pink ones are often easier to spot.



*Leaf scorpionfish seen at Lulu Deep, Mikindani Bay, last year*  
PHOTO: Ness Smith