Abstract

To test the hypotheses that U.S. Virgin Islanders knowledge about local coral reefs is correlated with behavior, and that different sociological groups of residents have different patterns of knowledge and behavior, a mixed approach to surveying residents was used: (1) personal interviews were held in public locations and (2) an online version of the survey was administered to residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands. From July-October 2008, 462 residents over 18 years old were surveyed. Results indicate that people who engaged in outdoor activities knew significantly more about coral reefs (Spearman p<0.01, r²=0.128). Those more knowledgeable about coral reefs engaged in more positive stewardship activities (e.g. beach clean-ups) (Spearman p<0.01, r²=0.127). Negative behaviors (e.g. anchoring on reef) were not significantly correlated with increased knowledge of coral reefs (Spearman p=0.911, r²=-0.000025). Fishers did not have greater ability in identifying Acropora palmate coral than non-fishers (χ²=4.138, p=0.126); however, swimmers, snorkelers and divers (as a class) were moreable to identify A. palmata than non-swimmers (χ²=9.764, p=0.002). Most residents identified sea turtle species as endangered (hawksbill turtle, 78.9%) but only 48.2% of the responses included Acropora spp. as threatened. Resident attitudes towards conservation of local resources were overwhelmingly positive. Rev. Biol. Trop. 58 (Suppl. 3): 197-212. Epub 2010 October 01.

Keywords

Behavior, stewardship, coral reefs, U.S. Virgin Islands, survey, Acropora.