



Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Thursday 11 September 2014

Eureka! Reef Life citizen-science project wins major prize

A major national science prize has been won for the second consecutive year by University of Tasmania researchers.

The 2014 NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Eureka Prize for Environmental Research was last night (**Wednesday 10 September 2014**) awarded to Professor Graham Edgar and Dr Rick Stuart-Smith of the Reef Life Survey team at the annual awards ceremony in Sydney.

The \$10,000 prize is awarded to an individual or team for an outstanding research project in any field of the biological, physical, mathematical or biomedical sciences leading to the resolution of an environmental problem, including a challenge posed by climate change, or the management or protection of Australia's environment.

The Reef Life Survey team has harnessed the efforts of more than 200 volunteer recreational divers around Australia and the world to create a unique global marine biodiversity dataset that's generating significant scientific findings.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, Professor Peter Rathjen, congratulated Professor Edgar and Dr Stuart-Smith. "I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of the volunteer divers who help collect data on thousands of marine species.

"This is an outstanding example of citizen science," Professor Rathjen said.

"It is very gratifying that this University's pursuit of excellence and the global impact of its research has been recognised once again this year by the judges of Australia's most prestigious science awards."

The Reef Life Survey has surveyed more than 2000 reefs around Australia and in more than 40 other countries since 2008.

“Such extensive coverage just wouldn’t be possible without the keenness of recreational divers and professional scientists to contribute in a voluntary capacity.” Dr Stuart-Smith points out, “and all being done in a coordinated fashion, using the same methods, is a big step forward and allows the research community to finally look at some of the questions we previously couldn’t answer.”

In 2013 the prize was awarded to a dingo research team led by University of Tasmania conservation biologist and zoologist Professor Chris Johnson.

For more information on the program please see the website www.reeflifesurvey.com, or find the RLS on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ReefLifeSurvey?fref=ts>.

See also the May 2014 edition of *Research to Reality*:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/research-to-reality/archive/online/edition-18,-may-2014>

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office, University of Tasmania
Phone: 61 3 6226 2124
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au