



Seacology Director Duane Silverstein & Amr Ali

Close to Europe, the Red Sea has more live-aboards and day dive boats than any other region of the world.

The frequent encounters with thresher and hammerhead sharks and the beauty of its hard and soft corals account for its popularity. Like the ironic fate of the goose that laid the golden eggs, unwittingly, divers may be loving the Red Sea reefs to death. With the large and growing number of boats dropping anchor daily, the reefs bear the brunt of this destructive practice.

Although a local NGO called HEPCA had installed the world's largest mooring buoy system in the Red Sea, more mooring buoys were needed around five islands in the 494,100-acre marine reserve adjacent to Wadi El Gemal (Land of the Camel) National Park off the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea. Seacology, an international NGO with the sole purpose of preserving the environments of islands throughout the globe, provided the funding to install 25 mooring buoys in the Wadi El Gemal area.

Recently, a group of Seacology board members and donors chartered the *Royal Evolution* to review the mooring buoy

Red Sea

Anchors Away

DUANE SILVERSTEIN



programme. A big and impressive man with a terrific sense of humor named Amr Ali met us on board. Amr, who humoured that the animal care authorities have banned him from riding camels lest he flattens their remaining hump, is the Executive Director of HEPCA. His track record in protecting his beloved reefs embodied the Seacology spirit magnificently. Amr's intimate knowledge of the laws, local procedures and contagious enthusiasm that preferred effective action rather than penning policy papers evoked a kindred spirit with me. Seacology board member Larry Barel's remark, "it's wonderful to travel across the planet and find people like Amr Ali who are such enthusiastic stewards of our environment, echoed seacology's sentiments"



After a short briefing by the HEPCA team and Amr's fascinating presentation we donned our dive gear. Board members Larry Barel and Doug Herst and Seacology donors Jeff Yonover and Paul Bartlett and I descended 12 meters to install the last mooring buoy. We took turns at the large underwater pneumatic drill to attach the mooring buoy deep into the sea bed. After an hour or so, with our bodies still vibrating we ascended in quiet accomplishment. 