

Letters

DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS

The culling of lionfish by divers, if done with care, is a good thing and one of the only methods of population control we have. But the practice of feeding dead or wounded lionfish to predators to “teach” them to prey on healthy lionfish has no basis for credibility and significant downsides. These predators are associating divers with free handouts and becoming increasingly aggressive. On the 4th annual REEF Lionfish Expedition to Belize this year, one of our participants was bitten by a barracuda that swooped in as he was removing a lionfish from his spear. Later, a large Nassau grouper did the same to me. This had never happened on previous trips. And divers aren’t the only ones at risk: Handing out lionfish may cause normally shy predators to grow accustomed to divers’ presence, making them easy prey for poachers. In my view, neither divers nor reef fish are served by this misguided practice.

— **Peter A. Hughes, president,**
DivEncounters Inc.

EUTROPHICATION SOLUTION

The article on eutrophication (Spring 2012) misses the only solution that will work to get rid of weedy algae smothering coral reefs, namely recycling all human-caused nutrient inputs on land where they can feed the plants and keeping them out of the ocean where they over-fertilize algae.

When reefs on one particular Pacific island were smothered with algae, they “solved” the problem by building longer sewage outfalls. The algae died back, and corals slowly recovered over many years. But now they are being smothered again because they can’t control the nonpoint nutrients from road runoff and lawn fertilizers that don’t go down sewers.

There is only one place in the world I know of where the problem has been permanently solved. I got all the nutrient inputs in a bay in Jamaica recycled on land instead of dumped into the sea. Within weeks the algae started to die back, and in two months they were gone. More than 15 years later the bay is still free of weeds, and elkhorn coral is growing back.

The only way to get rid of weedy algae is to starve them of nitrogen and phosphorus; it works very fast, but it must be sustained. Weeding

them is a fool’s errand, because as long as nutrients are excessive they grow right back.

To learn more about weedy-algae control, read a recent review at [http://www.globalcoral.org/sustainability-02-02919\[1\].pdf](http://www.globalcoral.org/sustainability-02-02919[1].pdf).

— **Thomas J. Goreau, Ph.D.,**
president, Global Coral Reef Alliance

LEMON SHARK SUNSET

Like many others I have been in awe of the modern rebirth of *Alert Diver*. Each new issue seems to outdo itself, and Spring 2012 was no exception. But there was one image that blew me away. It was that utterly stunning split-level shot of the shark at sunset. As an underwater photographer of the 1960s and ’70s I’ve been fortunate enough to be published on the cover of *Skin Diver* and elsewhere, so I have long maintained a critical eye for photographic excellence. After being complimented on a particular shot by famed Black Star photojournalist Flip Schulke, I asked him what, in his opinion, represented a great shot. He replied, “One I wish I had taken.” So kudos to Deano Cook, I wish I had taken your “Lemon Shark Sunset”!

— **Dick Clarke, Columbia, S.C.**

