

Helping the Reefs

Supplement to the December 2008 AFI magazine article "The Reef Stewardship Foundation."

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Fragging: Not the (Whole) Answer for Corals

The practice of fragging corals has revolutionized the aquarium as an industry and a hobby. Propagating corals from small fragments reduces the need to collect corals in the wild. The enthusiasm about fragging on online forums and at frag swaps suggests that frags have replaced wild-collected specimens in the hobby.

For all the benefits of fragging corals, there remain serious drawbacks. Coral frags are clones of the parent colony; as frags from the same coral pass from person to person, the genetics of the coral remain the same. All of the frags from the same parent colony will have the same genetic weaknesses as the parent colony. Additionally, corals in the reef hobby do not necessarily represent what is actually on the reefs. There is a natural selection process in the hobby that favors the most brightly colored morphs of corals. Reefs in the wild are often not as colorful (Paletta, Mike. "The 'Fragging Phenomenon.'" *Advanced Aquarists Online*. March 2006. www.advancedaquarist.com/2006/3/afeature3/view).

Sexual reproduction of corals has the potential to offer one huge advantage over fragging, assuming the establishment of practical methods. Where an exceptionally large coral can be fragged into a maximum of a couple dozen frags, in sexual reproduction the possibility exists of having thousands of offspring at a time--now that could truly revolutionize the reef hobby.

From Project DIBS to the Reef Stewardship Foundation

Founded in 2006 by long-time hobbyist Brian Plankis, the Reef Stewardship Foundation was originally called Project DIBS (Desirable Invertebrate Breeding Society). As the organization grew and its goals and scope expanded, it became clear that a new structure was necessary.

The decision to change the name was partly marketing (it was felt that Project DIBS did not immediately convey the function of the organization). Describing the search for a new name, Brian Plankis observed, "We realized that even though the programs had different goals, they were all based on stewardship." With this in mind, Project DIBS evolved into the Reef Stewardship Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the November 2008 issue of *Aquarium Fish International*, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.