

Making a splash in ocean conservation: Waitt Institute joins sponsors of first kids ocean club on Montserrat

Friday, 4 September 2015

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (*Waitt Institute*) – For the first time on Montserrat, kids had the opportunity to take part in an ocean club, Fish ‘N Fins. Over six weeks, 75 kids participated in ocean and conservation-themed activities with the goal of increasing the confidence and awareness of young Montserradians to the ocean and the coastal area of their island.

Fish ‘N Fins was created by [Aqua Montserrat](#) Director, Veta Wade, and coordinated with [Waitt Institute](#) Program Manager, Stephanie Roach and [Blue Halo Montserrat](#) Site Manager, Robin Ramdeen. The camp included daily snorkeling and swimming lessons, a beach cleanup in Carr’s Bay, guest presentations by local fishers and community members, as well as ocean and conservation-themed games, activities, and crafts.

“This summer has been a historic and extremely rewarding experience for me and the Aqua Montserrat team,” said Veta. “Never before in our island’s history has such an ocean camp been held, and we are proud to have created this opportunity for our island’s children.”

With the support of the Waitt Institute and [Government of Montserrat](#), Fish ‘N Fins was offered free of charge to kids ages 7-14. The Waitt Institute sponsored the camp by donating 30 sets of snorkel gear (masks with custom mask straps, fins, snorkels), 30 child-sized wetsuits, 8 sets of adult snorkel gear, catered lunches, and other gear such as shirts, stickers, and sunglasses. The Government of Montserrat also provided funding to support daily activities of the camp.

“The summer programme was well executed in introducing our children to the marine environment so that they can appreciate it’s beauty, usefulness, and participate in its protection and conservation,” said Hon. Claude Hogan, Minister of the Environment. “Our Ministry was honoured to sponsor to underscore the importance we attach to our marine environment.”

For many kids, Fish ‘N Fins was their first time snorkeling or swimming. “The kids were sometimes afraid, but what was amazing is the excitement and enthusiasm they have for the ocean, and how quickly they overcame their fears of the water,” explained Oslin Butler, Camp Liaison and Child Protection Expert at Aqua Montserrat.

The first session of Fish ‘N Fins was offered in conjunction with the E.S.C.A.P.E. summer program in July, and the second session was offered with a “Back-to-School” theme in late August. Beginning this fall, Aqua Montserrat will offer Saturday sessions of the camp with the occasional guest speaker and other opportunities.

“Fish ‘N Fins is exactly the kind of program the Waitt Institute is eager to support,” said Stephanie. “We’re thrilled to partner with organizations like Aqua Montserrat as part of Blue Halo Montserrat to allow more children to experience the ocean first-hand and inspire the next generation of ocean leaders on Montserrat and throughout the Caribbean.”

Additional information and resources:

Waitt Institute: <http://www.WaittInstitute.org>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WaittInstitute>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/waittinstitute/>

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YouTube: <http://youtube.com/waittinstitute>

Tumblr: <http://waittinstitute.tumblr.com/>

Dropbox folder with press photos: <http://bit.ly/WI-PressRelease-4Sept2015>

Aqua Montserrat: <http://www.aquamontserrat.com>

Fish 'N Fins Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AQUAFISHNFINS?fref=ts>

For more information or to set up interviews, contact:

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Waitt Institute: The [Waitt Institute](#) endeavors to ensure ecologically, economically, and culturally sustainable use of ocean resources. The Institute partners with governments committed to developing and implementing comprehensive, science-based, community-driven solutions for sustainable ocean management. Our goal is to benefit coastal communities while restoring fish populations and habitats. Our approach is to engage stakeholders, provide the tools needed to design locally appropriate policies, facilitate the policymaking process, and build capacity for effective implementation and long-term success.

Blue Halo Initiative: A “Blue Halo” describes the waters encircling an island where ocean resources are used sustainably, profitably, and enjoyably. The Institute partners with governments, communities, and scientists to create and implement policies, including sustainable fishing and comprehensive ocean zoning. The Institute provides the toolkit, and partner governments provide the political will. The Blue Halo Initiative deeply engages stakeholders through a science-based, community-driven approach.