Meet the New Marine Biologist at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort





Amelia Cody has taken up the role of resident marine biologist at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort. Here she shares scientific insights on marine ecosystems in the Maldives and what guests curious about the underwater world can discover and do to help while staying with Outrigger

Tell us about your background
I am a marine biology graduate from the UK. I've had a huge passion for the ocean from a young age. I was a very motivated and driven student at Newcastle University with the goal of becoming a marine biologist. Maldives has always been a dream location for me to work. So I am currently living my dream!

How did you first get interested in the sea and marine ecology?
At the age of seven I swam with dolphins in Portugal. From this encounter my mind was in awe of the underwater world. I learnt to dive at 11. Being able to explore the underwater world, to be submersed within the marine environmental was — and still is — the best feeling ever. My passion and love of sharks was developed through my strong feelings of how misunderstood they are.

What were your first impressions of Konotta and the house reef there?
Arriving at Konotta was like arriving at a secluded desert island in the middle of the ocean. The island is idyllic and peaceful. With a shoreline of 0.5km this tiny island is remarkably rich and full of marine life on its house reef. In the first week alone I saw the resident guitar shark, nurse shark and cow-tail ray. We have many reef fish, resident turtles and schools of snapper and jackfish.

What interesting marine life is there around Konotta that snorkelers and divers can easily see?
The Konotta house reef is highly diverse. We have around 15 resident reef sharks (blacktip, white tip and grey reef). We have a resident nurse shark by the water villas on the sloping reef, plus a guitar shark — don't worry, all of them are safe to swim with. We also have resident turtles, both hawksbill and green turtles. The Konotta reef has eagle, whiptail and cowtail rays, a variety of reef fish, many bio-eroders, parrot fish, pairs of butterfly fish, unicorn fish, large schools of bait fish, jackfish and tuna, to name but a few.

How is Outrigger's OZONE coral conservation program on Konotta going?
Part of Outrigger's ZONE globally (OZONE), the Konotta Restoration Project is very well established. We have 24 coral frames within the nursery. Each month coral frame planting events are advertised for guests and hosts at Konotta. I also give weekly marine talks to guests to update them about the project and the progress of all 24 frames.

What can guests do who want to help the marine environment while staying at Outrigger?
We have regular Dive Against Debris events where guests can help remove debris from the house reef at Konotta. We remove any garbage from the water and separate materials for recycling or waste disposal. Guests are also welcome to help with our monthly Desert Island Clean-up events in which we take away the debris washed up on a nearby island. We have monthly coral frame planting as part of our Konotta Restoration Project. Guests are given a briefing on coral biology and restoration methods we use to help coral regrowth. I give weekly presentations on the various marine subjects including coral restoration, ocean pollution, shark and turtle biology and marine life

in the Maldives.

What new or different things do you plan to offer guests on Konotta at Best Dives Maldives?
We are providing monthly Dive Against Debris events. These create awareness and educate guests and hosts about ocean pollution and management methods. I am offering a variety of marine talks to guests depending on what they wish to learn about. They can experience coral frame building on land without getting wet.

What can you do for families with young children staying at Outrigger?
There are lots of activities to take part in for families and young children. Depending on the exact age of the children and their comfort level in the water. We have guided house reef snorkelling where they can spot different fishes that I have briefed them about. We have tours of the house reef where families can stay dry and enjoy the wonders of the underwater world from inside a semi-submersible. We also have dolphin quest, a relaxing cruise to spot dolphins in and around the atoll.

What experience of Maldives had you had before Konotta?
Before Konotta I was marine biologist at a different resort in the north of the Maldives. I managed its coral rehabilitation program. In 2018 I worked with the Maldivian Whale Shark Research Program (MWSRP). I gave weekly presentations and workshops for local children, volunteers and adults about marine issues such as the importance of understanding megafauna behaviour to sustain populations and the increasing instance of plastics in the ocean.

What was your experience in Caribbean like?
Studying and working in Caribbean was amazing. I completed an overseas research project as part of my 3rd year dissertation in 2016 working in the Bahamas at Cape Eleuthera Institute. In 2018 I also worked for Operation Wallacea as a Site Manager and Coral Reef Ecology Lecturer on a marine project in Dominica. The daily interaction with students passionate about the ocean was so rewarding.

How much of a problem is coral bleaching in the Maldives?
Coral bleaching is a growing problem here in the Maldives and worldwide. With more instances of prolonged increase sea temperatures, we are seeing more stress and more bleaching in shallow water corals. A mixture of both natural and anthropogenic factors are contributing to global warming and increasing sea surface temperatures

In the world of marine biology, who is your biggest inspiration? Why?
I am inspired by Michel Scholl and Guy Stevens. Both are marine scientists increasing ocean awareness through their organisations, SaveOurSeas and Manta Trust. They have inspired me and supported me. In the last five years, I have also been in continuous contact with Terence Bully who created Blue Ocean Watch which focuses on research and education of global marine issues. Witnessing his determination, positivity, and continuous hard work motivates me each day in Konotta.

Guests can view the full choice of water sports, excursions and diving options at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort, click https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13lds2o9_l2mXUmzeaKzMJjeqoQrHB2M2?usp=sharing. Resort information and booking, click https://www.outrigger.com/hotels-resorts/maldives

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