

ST.VINCENT & THE GRENADINES ENVIRONMENT FUND

YOUTH OCEAN



ACADEMY

**Youth Ocean Academy
2025 Report**



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About the Program

The **Youth Ocean Academy (YOA)** is a six-month experiential ocean literacy program designed to inspire and equip young people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the knowledge, skills, and passion to become the next generation of Ocean Guardians. Through hands-on activities, local expert mentorship, and real-world conservation experiences, students explored the challenges and opportunities facing our marine environment while building a strong sense of stewardship for the ocean.

Across six modules — Sailing, Cetaceans, Coral, Sea Turtles, Water Quality, and Seabirds — students gained a deeper understanding of the ocean's interconnected systems and the role they can play in protecting them. By the end, each Ocean Guardian graduated, not only with knowledge, but with the confidence and commitment to champion ocean conservation in their communities.



Our Values

-  Experiential Learning
-  Showcase Local Experts
-  Connect Youth to Sea
-  Enhance Advocacy
-  Foster Stewardship
-  Inspire Future Conservation Careers



“This is easily the best program I've engaged in... the knowledge that you have to offer is inspiring!”

Ocean Guardian

YOA Feedback Survey, 2025

OUR APPROACH

At the Youth Ocean Academy, learning happens by doing. From the very first orientation session—where students played ocean-themed games like Ocean Heads-Up and Trace That Creature—to hands-on fieldwork across SVG, we embraced experiential learning as the heart of our program. Bringing together youth from diverse backgrounds and age groups, we cultivated an environment of curiosity, collaboration, and open dialogue, empowering students to share ideas, solve problems, and express themselves confidently.

Art and creativity were woven throughout: students designed their own guidebooks, personalised their ocean pledges, competed in poster challenges, and enjoyed ocean-themed pictiary, blending learning with self-expression. Each module included quizzes and scored activities, which contributed to overall scores culminating in a graduation ceremony where top Ocean Guardians vied for exciting ocean-related prizes. By the end of the program, every Ocean Guardian left with a personalised guidebook—a portfolio of notes, handouts, and experiences capturing their journey.

But YOA wasn't just about scores. We celebrated individuality and character with fun awards like Ray of Sunshine, Doodle Master, Future Influencer, and Captain Curious, highlighting the unique spark each student brought to the Academy. This holistic approach—balancing skills, knowledge, creativity, and confidence—ensures that Ocean Guardians leave not only informed but inspired, equipped, and empowered to care for SVG's marine environment.



MODULES



To the Sea!



Learning sailing knots

Sailing



Our Ocean Guardians dove into the world of sailing during the first module of the program. In the classroom, students learned the building blocks of sailing — from tying essential knots and reading the wind, to understanding how physical fitness and teamwork play into life at sea. Sessions also placed sailing in context: its deep history in the Caribbean, its role in shaping regional trade and culture, and its potential today as a sustainable and low-impact way of connecting with the ocean.

On the water, students sailed with SVG Sailing Association youth mentors, gaining skills and appreciating sailing as a sustainable pathway for SVG youth to engage with their marine space.



Sailing themed games



Gotta keep cool in de sun

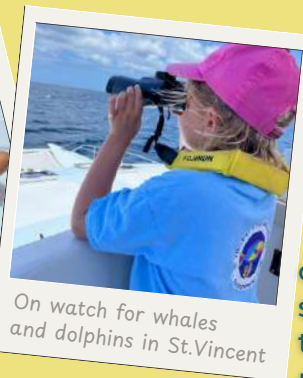
Cetaceans



characteristics that make them so special. Our Ocean Guardians then ventured out to sea for a real-life cetacean survey and gained hands-on experience in cetacean research, including the use of a handheld hydrophone to explore the role of acoustics in monitoring and understanding whale and dolphin behavior.



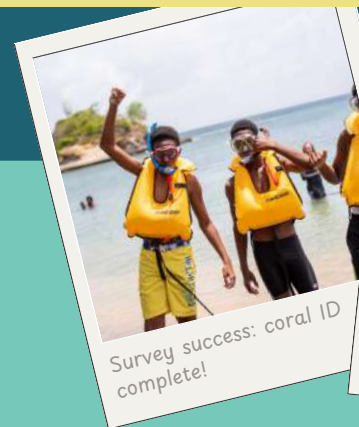
Big smiles at sea



On watch for whales and dolphins in St.Vincent

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is home to over one-third of the world's cetaceans. In this module, we explored the species found in local waters, their ecological importance, and the unique

Coral



Survey success: coral ID complete!



Symmetrical brain coral observed at Indian Bay

The Coral Module introduced students to the incredible biodiversity and ecological importance of Caribbean coral reefs. Students learned about coral biology, reef ecosystems, and the threats posed by climate change, pollution, and unsustainable practices. A game of Coral Reef Bingo kept the class lively. Through assisted snorkelling, the Ocean Guardians experienced the underwater world firsthand—some for the very first time—observing coral structures, reef fish, and other marine life up close. They documented their discoveries through note-taking, reinforcing observation skills.



Classroom monitor training before field work



Sea Turtle themed games

Sea Turtles



The Sea Turtle Module was led through the SVGEF's

flagship monitoring program, with our in-house mentors guiding the experience. To reinforce learning, students played a round of Sea Turtle Telephone, passing whispered facts along to see how well information survived the journey — a playful reminder of the importance of clear communication.

Students then journeyed to Big Sands, Sandy Bay — one of the island's index beaches — where they observed turtle tracks, nests, and clear signs of activity. A highlight was witnessing a live nest excavation, an unforgettable moment that brought conservation science to life. Along the way, Ocean Guardians discovered the many threats sea turtles face at each stage of their life cycle and gained a deeper appreciation of the vital role monitoring plays in protecting these ancient reptiles.



Excavating a hatched sea turtle nest for research



Observing leatherback sea turtle tracks for species ID



Dip-net survey for freshwater species



Water quality test kits to examine our rivers

In the Pollution and Water Quality Module, students explored the vital link between healthy waterways and marine ecosystems. Drawing on knowledge from SVGEF's Riverfish Project, they discovered native freshwater biodiversity and its conservation value.

Pollution



Following a river course, they conducted real-life water quality experiments, testing for phosphates, nitrates, dissolved oxygen, and pH. To bring science and creativity together, they teamed up for a poster competition, illustrating the importance of clean water for all life on Earth.



Ocean Guardians surveying sea birds



Brown Boobie in flight during survey at sea

Sea Birds



For our seabird module, Ocean Guardians set sail to Bequia to observe some of the region's most iconic coastal birds in their natural habitats. Nesting brown boobies, soaring frigate birds, laughing gulls, terns, and brown noddies brought lessons on seabird ecology to life. With support from BirdsCaribbean and armed with identification cards, the Ocean Guardians confidently honed their bird ID skills. The day ended with a well-deserved lunch and swim at Lower Bay—a joyful closing chapter to the program before graduation.

IMPACT

The **Youth Ocean Academy (YOA)** 2025 has successfully inspired a new generation of Ocean Guardians, with students demonstrating increased confidence, teamwork, practical field skills, and scientific knowledge (YOA Feedback Survey, 2025). Most reported a stronger commitment to caring for the ocean, and their enthusiasm translated into meaningful learning and memorable experiences. Parents noted enhanced curiosity, social growth, and environmental awareness in their children. By equipping youth with skills and knowledge, the program contributes to long-term appreciation and stewardship of SVG's aquatic and marine habitats.



YOA Ocean Guardians, Mentors, Volunteers & SVGEF Core Team in Bequia



100%

inspired to take better care of the ocean*



87%

more *confident* about ocean knowledge*



93%

satisfied with program content*

98%



would *recommend* YOA to their friends*

Feedback from our Ocean Guardians

"I got to experience the animals in their habitat."

"I really enjoy activities that boost my adrenaline!"

"I loved practicing what I had just learnt."

"The content! I loved learning the information shared about cetaceans."

30

OCEAN GUARDIAN GRADUATES

19

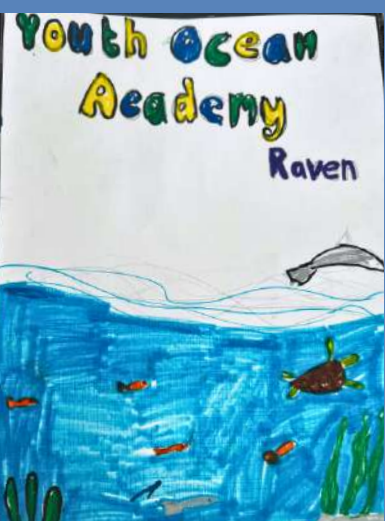
LOCAL EXPERT MENTORS

10

LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

13

LOCAL BUSINESSES ENGAGED



YOA CORE TEAM



STEPHAN HORNSEY
Executive Director

After working at the SVGEF for the last 3 years, Stephan now holds the role of Executive Director for the SVG Environment Fund. Stephan continues to use his dynamic work experience in project management, the arts, and business development in order to successfully deliver on the goals of the organisation.



LISA GAYMES
Administrative & Operations
Officer

With a BSc in Biology from the University of the Southern Caribbean and volunteer experience in conservation efforts in the Caribbean, Lisa has played a role in managing the SVGEF's Sea Turtle Project as Programme Manager. Now, as Admin and Operations Officer, she brings her passion for conservation and hands-on project management skills to a broader range of initiatives.



DELIGHT OLLIVIERRE
YOA Program
Manager

A Conservation Biologist at the Fisheries Division in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Delight grew up in Bequia within a seafaring family legacy. As Program Manager for the YOA, she blends science and creativity to make learning engaging for all. For over five years, she has worked with various youth and marine stakeholders to advance awareness, knowledge, and stewardship of our ocean.



COLIN BROWNE
Communications
Officer

With fifteen (15) plus years in the audio visual space, Colin has experience in film, music production, photography, social media and digital marketing.

Passionate about organisations that impact change in his community he joined the SVGEF in 2023 as their communications officer and has worked to improve the public facing image of the organisation.



Meet The Mentors

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Sailing



SVGSA Sailing Team

Led by Jenny Trumble with youth mentors Akira and Tegan, inspiring SVG's next generation of professional sailors



Canyon Duncan

Bequia-born entrepreneur & yacht captain, founder of Nirvana Yacht Charter and passionate about sailing and conservation



Delight Ollivierre

Zoologist and Conservationist from Bequia with a deep interest in cetaceans and 4 years scientific survey experience in the Caribbean



Kirk Grant

Born and raised in Barrouallie, Kirk is a champion for cetacean conservation who became one of the first whale watchers in the community and has a thriving tour business

Coral



Joshua Gooding

A proud Vincy ecologist with an MSc. in Ecological Restoration and a passion for marine ecology and exploring nature above and below water



Roz-Anna Baker

Marine biologist and Divemaster. Specializing in coral diseases, Roz-Anna brings passion for ocean exploration, scuba diving, and creative learning



Stephan Hornsey & Lisa Gaymes

SVGEF sea turtle team with 3 years of experience working under the fund's home grown sea turtle project bring their skills and experience to YOA

Water Quality & Pollution



Rowena Da Souza

Biology teacher with over 15 years' experience and an MSc in Marine Biology, Rowena is passionate about the outdoors and is dedicated to conserving the environment for future generations



John Renton

Retired school principal and Vincy naturalist with an MSc in Fisheries Biology, John brings 30 years' experience studying SVG's freshwater species and a deep commitment to conservation education.



Forestry Officers

Jodelia Simmons, Jason 'Central' Baker, and Ray Charles are attached to the SVGEF during their University Diploma. The team shared valuable knowledge and experience on river poisoning and enforcement in SVG

Sea Birds



SVGEF Core Team

Our very own SVGEF team used our experience and knowledge of sea birds from various projects to guide the students in a seabird survey at sea

VOLUNTEERS



Roshano Huggins

Roshano joined YOA to merge his passion for environmental studies with action, raising awareness and inspiring future generations



Adiah Phillips Jack

Recognizing the ocean's vital role in sustaining life, Adiah believes in promoting conservation through education and awareness of threats like pollution and overfishing



DeShawna Cain

As an aspiring marine biologist with a passion for all things sea and nature, DeShawna volunteered with YOA to inspire young minds while also broadening her own knowledge



RVA Marine Team

Tobias Herberg, Kenzit Durrant, Jean-Marc Samuel, Calvert Phillips and Leon McKenzie, are all skilled SCUBA divers with hands-on experience in coral restoration across St. Vincent and the Grenadines

THANK YOU

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