

Summer Course in Thailand

Marine and Tropical Coastal Ecosystems: Whales, Sea Turtles, and Reefs

A field-based summer course in marine conservation in the Gulf of Thailand

Four weeks studying sea turtles, Bryde's whales, and coral reefs in the Gulf of Thailand — including extensive SCUBA diving and Open Water and Advanced Open Water certification — culminating in an Independent Field Research Project.

MODULE 1

Sea Turtle Conservation

Week 1 · Rayong & Samut Sakorn

Visits to the Royal Thai Navy sea turtle conservation unit, work with the Thai Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), and hands-on work at an endangered marine animal rescue center ground a study of sea turtle biology, and nesting threats.

- Royal Thai Navy sea turtle conservation unit
- Sea turtle nursery & coral propagation study, Koh Mannai
- Hands-on sea turtle care at a rescue center under the supervision of a DMCR veterinarian

MODULE 2

Marine Mammals

Week 2 · Upper Gulf of Thailand

Whale-watching surveys and working with DMCR researchers and ecotourism operators ground a study of Bryde's whale ecology and the impact of shipping traffic on marine mammals.

- Whale-watching surveys with both ecotourism and DMCR operators
- Field survey with DMCR's marine mammal research unit
- Discussions with local stakeholders

MODULE 3

Coral Reefs in the Gulf of Thailand

Week 3 · Koh Tao

Open Water and Advanced Open Water SCUBA certification on Koh Tao, in partnership with Global Reef, an ongoing coral research and restoration project, building the skills for hands-on reef survey and propagation work.

- Open Water & Advanced Open Water SCUBA certification, additional certifications available for experienced divers
- Field partner: Global Reef, Koh Tao
- Coral propagation & reef survey fieldwork

MODULE 4

Conservation Challenges & Wrap-Up

Week 4 · Chiang Mai, Thailand

The course closes with continued reef ecology study, conversations on policy and community-based conservation, and presentation of each student's Independent Field Research Project.

- Final field studies
- Community-based conservation discussions
- Independent Field Research Project presentations

WHAT MAKES THIS SUMMER COURSE UNIQUE

One marine ecosystem

Sea turtles, whales, and coral reefs are studied as all are shaped by the health of the Gulf of Thailand — one connected system, not three separate topics.

Independent research

Students conduct their own research projects, with every module building towards an Independent Field Research Project, presented in Module 4.

Dive certified

SCUBA certification is built directly into the course for divers and non-divers alike. Experienced divers may have the opportunity for additional certifications

Real research, not just observation

Reef surveys, sea turtles, and marine mammal fieldwork contribute directly to ongoing conservation research.

4 credits · 4 weeks · Early Decision: January 31 · Deadline: April 1

Questions? Email us at admissions@isdsi.org

Apply now: isdsi.org/summer/marineecology

