

# Coral Reef Mooring Buoys

## Green Turtle Cay, Abacos, Bahamas

Reef mooring buoys have been installed at several popular coral reef sites near Green Turtle Cay. Buoys eliminate anchor damage to fragile living corals by providing an easy alternative to dropping anchor. Coral reefs are comprised of slow growing hard and soft corals that are actually living animals called coral polyps that can be crushed or damaged by anchors. When visiting the reef, be sure to avoid all other contact with the coral from fins, hands and dive equipment.

### 1) MUNJACK NORTH 2

N 26 51 35.5  
W 077 22 40.3

Heading north out of Munjack Channel, this mooring buoy is to the left and on the inside of the passage through the reef. This snorkel site is located in 12 feet of water and is dominated by Elkhorn coral.

### 2) ROCKY BAY HUMP

N 26 49 22.4  
W 077 20 47.7

This is one of many small coral outcroppings that are found off of Rock Bay. The buoy was placed to accommodate small dinghies and skiffs. There is ample sand for larger boats to anchor in the area surrounding the reef. This buoy marks the beginning of many shallow coral reefs that are north of Green Turtle Cay off shore of Munjack Cay.

### 3) CRAB CAY

N 26 49 02.3  
W 077 20 21.3

This site is in 18 foot of water and is easily accessible by boats approaching the reef from Green Turtle Cay Channel. A short snorkel east of this buoy there are beautiful coral formations. This buoy also indicates the presence of these very shallow reefs that are impossible to navigate through.

### 4) NORTH GREEN TURTLE

N 26 48 03.6  
W 077 42.4

Surrounded by deep water and beautiful white sand, this reef is excellent for diving and snorkeling. A wide variety of fish here offer excellent photographic opportunities. This buoy is easily approached from Green Turtle Cay Channel. Wide, open, sandy areas are immediately north of this site.

### 5) RAVEN'S CLIFF

N 26 48 18.6  
W 077 19 37.7

This buoy is located to the south of shallow coral plateau so the final approach to this buoy should be on an easterly course. Both dolphins and sharks have been spotted at this site and it is excellent for both diving and snorkeling.

### 6&7) SEA GARDENS 1 & 2

N 24 45 36.6  
W 077 17 45.5

This is the most frequently visited shallow reef in the Green Turtle area. An abundance of hard and soft corals make this a favorite with snorkelers. Proceed eastward through the north No Name Cay Channel and you'll find the buoys just off Pelican Cay on the left.

### 8) NO NAME CAY INNER REEF #1

N 26 45 13.5  
W 077 17 45.5

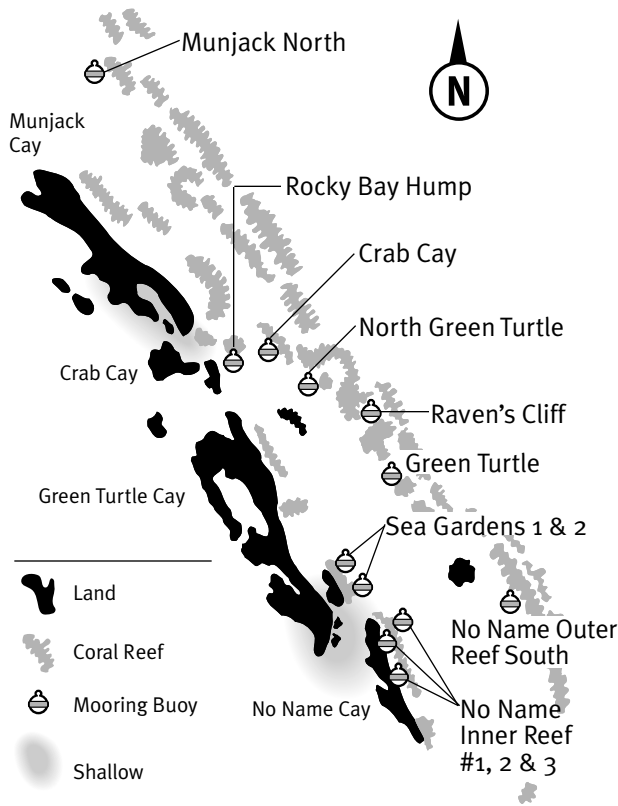
Both No Name Inner Reef Buoys 1 & 2 should be approached with caution. Proceed through North No Name Channel and turn abruptly to the right and parallel the shoreline – 50 to 75 feet offshore. The passage quickly opens up to allow transits from one end of No Name Cay to the other. Buoy 1 should not be used in as westerly wind because of its close proximity to very shallow coral. These shallow inner reefs usually provide very calm seas and excellent snorkeling.

### 9) NO NAME CAY INNER REEF #2

N 26 45 03.5  
W 077 17 42.4

The same care should be taken approaching as No Name 1. This location offers a diversity of environments including sand bottom, sea grass, hard bottom, soft coral and

## GREEN TURTLE CAY, ABACOS BAHAMAS, REEF MOORING BUOY SITES



Elkhorn coral. This area is destined to become the location of a coral nursery.

### 10) NO NAME CAY INNER REEF #3

N 26 45 14.7  
W 077 17 39.5

This buoy has been placed outside the inner reef at No name Cay in a very dynamic area allowing for diving or snorkeling on the face of the reef. Sea grass meadows transcend through isolated boulder corals adjacent to shallow Elkhorn coral.

### 11) NO NAME OUTER REEF NORTH

N 26 45 03.5  
W 077 17 42.4

This buoy is located on the west side of the outer bank reefs, east of No Name Cay in a grotto of Elkhorn coral that is accessible from the west. The area offers an abundance of healthy coral that divers and snorkelers can enjoy. Approach this buoy on an easterly course with due caution, even though there is plenty of water in the immediate area of the buoy.

### 12) NO NAME OUTER REEF SOUTH

N 26 45 10.0  
W 077 17 42.4

This is the most spectacular shallow coral reef in the Abacos. The buoy is located in a grotto accessible from the west that is bordered by Elkhorn coral. Approach this buoy on an easterly course with due caution, even though there is plenty of water in the immediate area.

# How to use Reef Mooring Buoys

## Visiting the coral reefs in the Green Turtle Cay area

Access to the offshore coral reefs is limited by the depth of the channels on either side of Green Turtle Cay, which are less than three feet deep. Munjack Channel to the north of Munjack Cay and Rock Channel to the south of No Name Cay are deeper and will allow deep draft vessels safe passage to the outer reefs. However, once on the east side of the cays, the shallow water and multitude of shallow coral reefs make navigation for deep draft vessels impossible. The Munjack North buoy and the No Name Cay Outer Reef buoys are frequently used by captains with local knowledge operating large sport fishing vessels. Sailboats are encouraged to avoid these buoys because of the shallow water in the area. Most of the buoys are strategically located to provide access to small dinghies, inflatables and open fishing boats.

### A few basic steps should be taken when using a reef-mooring buoy:

1. The buoys are available for public use on a “first come first serve” basis at no charge. If all buoys are in use, smaller boats can tie up to one another on one buoy, provided the captain of the vessel approves.
2. Slowly approach the buoy from downwind and/or down current. Slowly navigate around swimmers and watch for dive bubbles.
3. Use a boat hook to grab the pick-up line of the reef-mooring buoy. Insert your bowline through the mooring buoy pick-up line and cleat it securely. Let out extra scope to create a horizontal pull on the mooring.
4. Inspect the entire buoy system once you are in the water to make sure there are no problems. Remember, you are still responsible for your vessel.
5. The mooring buoys are voluntary No Take Zones. Please do not feed fish, collect marine life or spear fish in the vicinity of the buoys. This will allow the coral reef communities to flourish in these areas and allows the next visitors using a buoy to experience the same enjoyment that you had.

### When at the reef, follow these tips as well:

- If you choose not to use a mooring buoy, anchor only in sandy areas away from coral and sea grass so that your anchor and chain do not damage them. It is helpful to look before you drop anchor.
- *Snorkel aware, dive with care!* Remind your guests not to touch, stand or walk on the living coral. Even the slightest human touch can introduce harmful bacteria that can potentially infect the corals. Float coats are recommended

for use by small children, the elderly and those not comfortable in the water. Life vests can be used as float coats by lying on them. They are also a safety feature, being highly visible to other boaters.

- Bring all trash back to shore and do your part by retrieving any marine debris seen floating in the ocean. Turtles, whales and birds often mistake marine debris for food and end up choking or becoming entangled in it. Plastics can suffocate corals.
- Check the weather and the tides before heading out to the reef. During low tide the water is calmer on these reefs because the offshore reefs buffet the ocean swells. In Green Turtle Cay it is easy to observe sea conditions from shore before heading out.
- Use biodegradable bilge cleaner and never discharge bilge water or holding tanks near the reef. Do not clean the bottom of your boat over a reef; remember bottom paint is designed to kill.
- If at all possible, visit the reefs for the first time with someone who has local knowledge and pay attention to the color of the water to avoid accidental boat groundings. Brown-brown run aground, blue-blue sail on through, white-white it may be all right.

This project was made possible through the support of the Green Turtle Cay Foundation, in cooperation with the Town of New Plymouth, the Edith & Curtis Munson Foundation, Linton's Cottages, Cape Air, and individual volunteers and contributors. Reef Relief installed the buoys as a community project. Reef Relief is a non-profit membership group dedicated to *Preserve and Protect Living Coral Reef Ecosystems through local, regional, and international efforts*. For further information, contact reef Relief, PO Box 430, Key West, FL 33041 Tel (305) 294-3100, fax (305) 293-9515, email [reef@bellsouth.net](mailto:reef@bellsouth.net), website: [www.reefrelief.org](http://www.reefrelief.org).

