

NKUST Hosts 2026 CoralWatch Asia Ambassador Workshop in Southern Taiwan, Bringing Together Global Participants to Advance Citizen Science, Ocean Literacy, and Coral Reef Conservation

From May 14–17, 2026, the coastal waters of Taiwan's Hengchun Peninsula hosted the 2026 CoralWatch Asia Ambassador Workshop, an international training initiative dedicated to strengthening coral reef monitoring, citizen science, and marine conservation capacity across the Asia-Pacific region.

Organized in collaboration with the internationally recognized CoralWatch citizen science initiative developed by The University of Queensland, the four-day workshop was hosted by the Marine Affairs Research Center of National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology (NKUST) with support from Ocean Conservation Administration under the Ocean Affairs Council in Taiwan. The workshop also incorporated collaboration with CTUF (Chinese Taipei and Underwater Federation) and CMAS (Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques), particularly in relation to scientific diving–related field practices.

The workshop brought together participants from Chinese Taipei and several countries including the Philippines, Malaysia, the United States, and Finland, reflecting growing international collaboration in coral reef conservation and ocean sustainability. Participants represented diverse professional sectors, including marine science, environmental education, diving instruction, museums, government agencies, and environmental organizations.

Designed as an intensive professional training program, the workshop combined classroom lectures with field-based marine exercises. Participants received specialized instruction in coral reef ecology, climate change impacts on marine ecosystems, standardized coral health monitoring methodologies, scientific data interpretation, and citizen science applications. Field activities conducted in the waters surrounding the Hengchun Peninsula provided hands-on experience in reef assessment and underwater monitoring techniques using internationally standardized CoralWatch methods and scientific snorkeling–related field practices.

Ms. Hsiao-Hsia Lee, Deputy Director-General of Ocean Conservation Administration, stated that the workshop successfully integrated Chinese Taipei's marine environments and educational resources with internationally standardized coral monitoring methodologies. She noted that it demonstrated strong potential as a regional model for marine conservation training, citizen science engagement, and ocean literacy promotion throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to technical and scientific training, the workshop placed strong emphasis on science communication, environmental education, and community engagement. Organizers aimed to cultivate a regional network of CoralWatch ambassadors capable of leading local initiatives in

coral reef monitoring, public outreach, and marine conservation advocacy within their respective communities and countries.

Professor Po-Chang Ko, Vice President of NKUST, stated that the workshop reflected Chinese Taipei's commitment to marine conservation, ocean literacy, and international scientific collaboration. He emphasized that the workshop sought not only to strengthen scientific capacity, but also to empower participants to transform scientific knowledge into meaningful conservation action and public engagement. He further highlighted that Chinese Taipei currently ranks 7th globally in the number of CoralWatch coral reef monitoring data submissions, demonstrating a strong foundation in citizen science and coral reef conservation participation. He added that continued outreach and international collaboration are expected to further enhance Chinese Taipei's contribution and visibility within the global marine conservation network.

Dr. Li-Shu Chen, Head of the Research and Collections Division at the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology, described the workshop as an important step in strengthening connections between Chinese Taipei and international coral reef conservation networks. She noted that the integration of the CoralWatch Coral Health Chart, standardized educational resources with localized field training helps cultivate professionals capable of advancing coral reef monitoring, citizen science, and marine environmental education across the region.

The Hengchun Peninsula was selected as the workshop location due to the ecological significance of its coral reef ecosystems and its importance as a biodiversity hotspot within the Western Pacific region. The area provided an ideal environment for practical reef monitoring training while highlighting the need for collaborative conservation efforts in the face of climate change, coral bleaching, and increasing human pressures on marine ecosystems.

As coral reef ecosystems worldwide continue to face escalating environmental challenges, the 2026 CoralWatch Asia Ambassador Workshop served as a platform for scientific exchange, regional cooperation, and practical conservation training. Through international collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement, the workshop contributed to building long-term regional capacity for coral reef protection and sustainable ocean stewardship across the Asia-Pacific region.

Professor Shiau-Yun Lu, Director-General of Ocean Conservation Administration, affirmed that the agency will continue to advance international collaboration, professional training, and regional marine conservation partnerships aimed at strengthening long-term coral reef protection, citizen science engagement, scientific snorkeling capacity building, and ocean governance capacity throughout the Asia-Pacific region.





Photo	Photo Captions
	<p>Figure 1</p> <p>With support from Ocean Conservation Administration, National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology (NKUST) organized the 2026 CoralWatch Asia Ambassador Workshop.</p>
	<p>Figure 2</p> <p>Participants from Chinese Taipei and abroad conducted hands-on coral health monitoring in the waters of the Hengchun Peninsula using the CoralWatch Coral Health Chart and standardized survey methods, showcasing the practical achievements of citizen science practice.</p>
	<p>Figure 3</p> <p>Participants from multiple countries engaged in coral reef conservation training, conducting data interpretation and group discussions. Through the CoralWatch international monitoring system, they learned standardized methodologies, strengthening cross-border collaboration and scientific communication capacity.</p>
	<p>Figure 4</p> <p>The public outreach and training showcase of the workshop was held at Manzhou Junior High School in Pingtung County.</p>



Figure 5

Participants presented training outcomes through demonstrations, experience sharing, and community engagement activities, highlighting achievements in coral reef monitoring, citizen science, and marine conservation action, while strengthening ocean literacy and local community connections.



Figure 6

Ms. Hsiao-Hsia Lee, Deputy Director-General of Taiwan's Ocean Conservation Administration (second left), Professor Po-Chang Ko, Vice President of NKUST (third left), Mr. Jung-Fu Ku, Mayor of Manzhou Township (second right), and Mr. Fu-Hao Yu, Principal of Manzhou Junior High School, attended the public outreach and training showcase in support of marine conservation and ocean literacy education initiatives.



Figure 7

Group photograph in field practice.