



Fish Feeding and the Four Deadly D's

It's an entertaining and interactive marine experience for the diver, and an easy meal for those beautiful fish, so what's the problem? It is now generally accepted that despite being a "once in a lifetime experience", feeding of marine fish is a bad idea for everyone, including divers, fish and the ecosystem. The Green Fins 4 Deadly D's explains why we should not feed the fish, or throw food leftovers and waste into the sea.

1. DISRUPTION of ecological processes

Over time this activity can change the behaviour of the fish as they learn to connect divers, snorkellers and the boats with feeding time. Marine life maintains an intricate balance of ecological relationships and behaviour. Unnatural feeding forces species who would never usually come into contact, to interact which may result in serious injury and harm to individuals. Upsetting such complex and unique systems can lead to measurable negative impacts.

2. DISADVANTAGEOUS health impacts to fish

When fed, the fish may stop natural feeding cycles which are important to ensure they are receiving the correct nutrients to survive. Over a prolonged period, fish conditioned to accepting a free meal from a diver could become under nourished, stressed or may even result in them dying.

3. DANGER to humans

Attacks and bites have been increasingly reported by fish feeders and others in the vicinity because the marine life mistake divers' actions for handouts, or the marine life lose their natural wariness of humans underwater. There was highly publicised case of a resident moray eel in the Similans trained to eat sausages by visiting divers, one day it mistook a diver's thumb for a sausage and bit the whole thing off.

4. DAMAGING the Environment

Many fed species like groupers and small sharks are predators whose feeding habits provide key roles in the delicate balance of life on coral reefs and other marine habitats. By supplementing the diet of these fish, we interrupt this important natural balance. There is much evidence today in Thailand that fish feeding is increasing the severity and rate of the coral eating Crown of Thorns (COT) Starfish outbreaks. For example, Sergeant Majors feed on the starfish's eggs, trigger fish feed on either young or adult COT and even parrotfish, the algae grazer, might eat juvenile COT accidentally when grazing. So by feeding these fish you are increasing the survival rate of COT which will lead to more destruction of the reefs.

Green Fins asks all tourists, divers, and boat crew **not** to feed fish **anywhere**, to throw your left over lunch into the bin and to **ensure** that rubbish is taken off the boat and disposed of **responsibly**. It is even illegal to feed fish in National Parks around Thailand.

Thank you very much for supporting marine conservation and helping us to save our seas.