A team of 14 marine scientists from the Marshall Islands and five other countries recently completed a survey of the marine life and natural resources of Mili Atoll. Under the leadership of Dr. Silvia Pinca of CMI, the team spent two weeks aboard the MMRA ship Lentarian surveying nearly every region of the atoll.

Special attention was paid to the northeast corner of Mili, which is the site of a proposed Marine Protected Area (MPA). The data collected from the survey will serve as important baseline information on the biodiversity and abundance of local resources for years to come.

The field trip was held with the generous support of the Wildlife Foundation, and the generous support of the Hawaii Endowment, where they are conducting similar surveys based from the new liveboard diving facility on Funafuti Atoll.

Some data collection was expressed by the team at the lack of sharks seen during the survey. It is very difficult to monitor reserve effects. Mili Mayor Lena Lenga and a landowner from the community who recognized the team of scientists on the expedition, showed great interest in their desire to assess the marine resources of the atoll in the early stages of MPA development.

The team was treated with generous hospitality by the residents of both Takewa and Lukanor, where they stayed for several nights camping near the schoolhouses.

It will take the team several weeks to analyze the data they collected and to present the results. However, the early results of their survey suggest that Mili currently supports an abundance of marine life that is of great value to fishermen, tourists, and scientists alike.

Survey team member Melba White holds one end of a tape measure during a dive at Mili Atoll.

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