

CARIBBEAN CORRESPONDENCE

Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean Monthly Note to Members

Please continue to send education and research updates to be featured in upcoming issues as well as opportunities for collaboration to communications.amlc.carib@gmail.com.

AMLC Meeting Award : Student Grants-in-Aid of Caribbean Research

Congratulations to Hannah Nylander-Asplin for receiving a Student Grant-in-Aid award at the 38th AMLC Scientific Meeting to support her research on population transitions from the threatened parental species, *Acropora cervicornis*, to its hybrid in the USVI. Hannah has always been passionate about understanding the ocean. Although being from Minnesota makes it difficult to study marine organisms, she has always been motivated to become a marine biologist. After receiving her Bachelor of Science in Biology and Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Sustainability from the University of Minnesota, she moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. While in New England, she researched large cetaceans including humpback, fin, and minke whales. Since then, Hannah has had the opportunity to work with bottlenose dolphin acoustics and loggerhead sea turtle nesting in South Carolina. At Nova Southeastern University, her research concentrates on the population dynamics of the hybrid coral *Acropora prolifera*, and the parent species *A. cervicornis* and *A. palmata* in the Virgin Islands, US. These coral species are especially important to research as they are primary reef builders and help maintain the structural integrity of the reef system.



AMLC Meeting Award : Student Grants-in-Aid of Caribbean Research



Congratulations to John S. Cassell for receiving a Student Grant-in-Aid award at the 38th AMLC Scientific Meeting to support his research on the palatability of seagrass species in Brewers Bay, St. Thomas USVI. John is a marine scientist examining the potential impacts of an invasive seagrass, *Halophila stipulacea* in the Caribbean. Due to limited publications in the Caribbean, his research will be valuable to other scientists on islands where this plant is found. While John was at college in Florida, he learned one invasive species can impact dozens of others. Florida is home to many reptiles, plants, and fish that were introduced by humans. However, it is difficult to remove these organisms because they spread rapidly. The seagrass *H. stipulacea* may not be eaten by some herbivores which allows it to grow quickly. To examine how nutritious it is, John is looking at levels of protein, lipids, Carbon, Nitrogen, minerals, and carbohydrates inside the leaves. He has collected samples every 4

months to compare nutrients with seasons. His goal is to better understand why animals like sea turtles and urchins choose not to eat this seagrass based on its nutrient contents.