

# THE DREW LAB AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

## ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND CONSERVATION OF CORAL REEFS

 

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## This summer's research, #CUinFiji and tweeting an expedition

The semester is winding down and accordingly I'm ramping up my research plans for the summer. The big event this year will be leading an expedition to Fiji with support from the Mindlin Foundation, Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History.

Briefly we have several goals for the expedition. The first will be to build collections of coral reef fishes from shallow (<30m) of Fiji. Specifically we are hoping to sample an area *before* it is placed in a *tabu* (a traditional temporary no-take) protected area. We will also be sampling in a non-protected control area. We then hope to secure enough funding to repeat this sampling over the next five to seven years to explore issues of conservation management effectiveness and no-take mediated trophic cascades.

We also have a couple of cool collaborative projects looking at the distribution and biogeography of coral microbiota (in conjunction with [Jen Biddle](#) and [Holly Bik](#)). Similarly we will be looking at trophic differences in gut microbiomes within surgeonfishes with some help from [Seth Bordenstein](#). Finally we will be using this conjunction with the data [Mark Westneat](#)'s lab and I collected in [Papua New Guinea](#) to help understand the phylogenetics of community assembly in coral reef fishes. Phew, that's a lot. good thing we've got a big team.

However, in addition to really interesting science, I'm particularly excited for the outreach component of this trip. I will be (hopefully) giving talks at the University of the South Pacific as well as for the NGO community in Fiji. We will also be traveling with [Helen Scales](#) who is a talented and innovative science communicator, who will be doing a lot of great writing, filming and podcasting. Lastly, we will be tweeting the expedition.

I recently wrote over on Nature some tips for how and [why one should tweet an expedition](#) (and all of the people above are active on twitter, so hopefully they'll contribute). I find it a great way to let people know what it means to do expeditionary based field research, and to gain an insight into what doing work in Fiji is like. I'm also hopeful that we'll be able to field questions (no pun intended) from the general public about the importance of coral reefs, marine conservation and climate change impacts on small island states. Please join the conversation with #CUinFiji.

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