



GRAND PARK
— KODHIPPARU —
MALDIVES

CONNECT WITH *Nature*

ISSUE 1 | JULY 2026

A NOTE FROM GRACE



GRACE YANEZ

*Resident Marine Biologist
Grand Park Kodhipparu*

I've been a marine biologist for 4 years, and I've worked on reef systems from the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean to the reefs of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean. But the house reef at Kodhipparu is something I wasn't quite prepared for. The species diversity here, the coral cover, the clarity of the water — it's genuinely exceptional, and in a climate moment when so many reefs are under severe pressure, it's also a privilege and a responsibility. I joined Grand Park Kodhipparu in May 2026 with a clear purpose: to share what makes this reef extraordinary, to make sure it stays that way and to help protect it from further treats.

Every month I find something on this reef that stops me — a rare sighting, an unusual behaviour, a moment of colour or stillness that I want to share. This is my way of doing that. Every edition will take you somewhere specific on the reef, introduce you to the species I'm most excited about, and tell you exactly how to experience it for yourself. The reef is the reason this place exists. I'm here to make sure you get to know it.

FIND ME AT THE REEF



Guided Reef Snorkel -

a morning introduction to the house reef with species identification and ecological context. Suitable for all levels, including non-swimmers with a float board.



Marine Biology Dive -

for certified divers, an immersive exploration of the reef drop-off with live commentary, species surveys, and biodiversity documentation.



Reef Talk -

an afternoon session at the Beach Club, where Grace shares the month's most significant sightings, reef health updates, and what to look for next.

A NEW CHAPTER BENEATH THE SURFACE

Protecting our house reef isn't simply part of our sustainability programme — it's at the heart of Connected Island Luxury. Every snorkel, every guided reef walk, and every guest experience begins with a healthy marine ecosystem. This first edition of Connect with Nature marks a new chapter in sharing that story, and the arrival of Grace Yanez as our Resident Marine Biologist is the beginning of something we've been working towards for a long time: a resort where nature is not just protected, but truly experienced.

The reef at Kodhipparu has always been extraordinary. What we are building now is the infrastructure to share it properly — the people, the programmes, and the publications that allow every guest who steps into this water to understand what they are looking at. Connect with Nature is part of that. So is Grace. So is the ongoing coral restoration work, the weekly reef conservation initiatives, and the recognition this resort has received from the wider world for the way we care for this place.

- Grace Yanez joins Grand Park Kodhipparu as Resident Marine Biologist — bringing reef expertise, guided experiences, and a new depth of connection between guests and the natural environment.
- Connect with Nature launched as a monthly editorial — moving from observation to experience.
- Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Asia Pacific 2026 — recognised among the Best House Reefs in the region. A distinction that belongs to this reef, and to everyone who has worked to protect it.
- Green Globe Certified for the 7th consecutive year, including our 3rd consecutive Gold Status — independently verifying the environmental standards that underpin everything guests experience here.
- Reef conservation initiatives — Reef clean-ups, weekly presentation and educational talk, open to any guest who wants to take part. Because the best way to care about a reef is to spend time in it.



HIGHLIGHTS

JULY 2026



June is one of the most significant months of the year for ocean and environmental conservation, marked by four global observances: World Reef Day (1st), World Environment Day (5th), World Ocean Day (8th), and World Sea Turtle Day (16th). Together, these dates form a powerful reminder of how interconnected our planet's ecosystems truly are — from the coral reefs that shelter a quarter of all marine species, to the ocean currents that regulate global climate, to the ancient sea turtles that have migrated these waters for over 100 million years. At Grand Park Kodhipparu, this month carries particular weight: surrounded by one of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems on Earth, these global observances are not abstract dates on a calendar, but a direct reflection of the environment we live and work in every day.

On 5th June — World Environment Day — I joined our team for the island clean-up: walking the beach, collecting what the tides had left behind. It's a quiet thing, and a grounding one. Going forward, reef clean-ups will become a weekly fixture here — open to any guest who wants to join. There's something worth experiencing in doing something that matters for a place this beautiful. Please feel free to contact our lifestyle host if you'd like to be part of it.



DID YOU KNOW?



World Reef Day marks the 1998 global coral bleaching event.



The ocean produces more than half the world's oxygen and absorbs around 30% of global CO₂.



Five of the world's seven sea turtle species inhabit the Indo-Pacific region, including Maldivian waters.



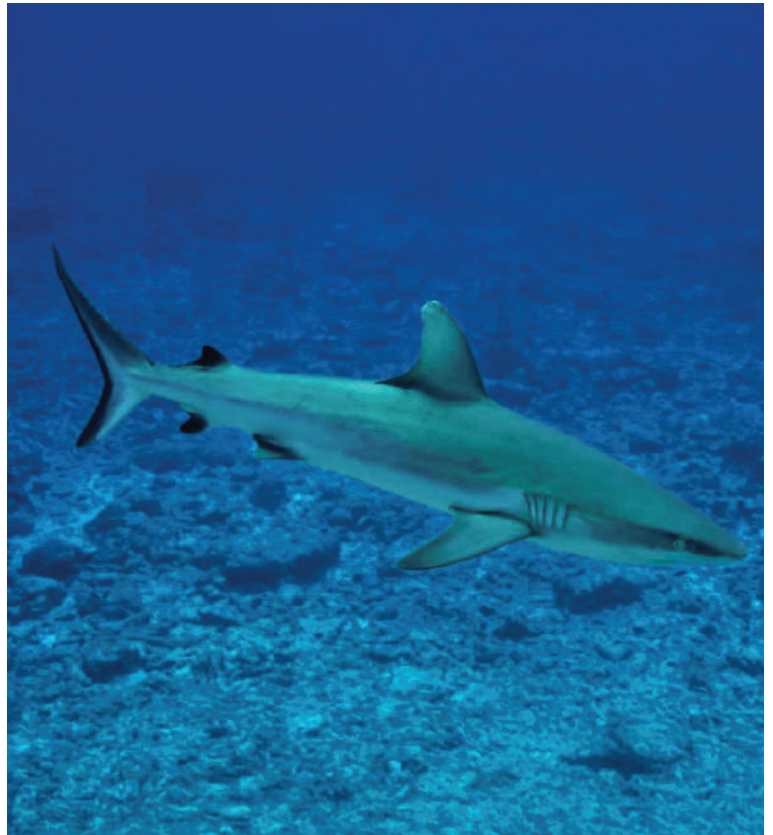
Kodhipparu's house reef water temperatures remained below the bleaching threshold this month.

NOTABLE SIGHTINGS

GREY REEF SHARK

Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos

There is a particular kind of stillness that falls over a dive group when a shark appears on the reef wall. This month, during one of our survey dives at the outer reef edge, a Grey Reef Shark moved steadily along the drop-off, unhurried, entirely in its element. As an apex predator of Indo-Pacific reef systems, its presence here tells a story we want to keep telling: that the reef at Kodhipparu is structured, complex, and alive enough to support species that depend on everything being in order. A reef with sharks is a reef that is working. Joining one of our marine-guided dives or snorkel sessions gives you the chance to experience exactly this kind of moment — not staged, not guaranteed, but very much possible.



LONGHEADED EAGLE RAY

Aetomylaeus maculatus

Among the most significant encounters of the month was the sighting of a Longheaded Eagle Ray on the Kodhipparu house reef. This species is classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and is considered genuinely rare in Maldivian waters, with very few documented records in the North Malé Atoll region. Its distinctive elongated snout and spotted dorsal pattern made it immediately recognizable, and the encounter represents a significant observation for the resort's marine biodiversity records.



MEET THE REEF

This Month on the Reef: Feather Starfish (*Stephanometra* sp.)

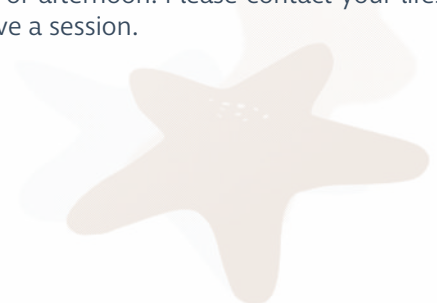


One of my favourite sightings this month — and one I keep taking guests back to — is something most people walk straight past in a fish tank but stop completely for underwater. The feather starfish, technically a crinoid, looks as though it has been arranged there deliberately: a living sculpture, hundreds of feathered arms spread wide in the current, each one filtering microscopic particles with a precision unchanged across 480 million years. This is one of the oldest body plans in the ocean. And right now, you can reach out and float alongside it on the Kodhipparu house reef.

What I love most about showing guests this species is the moment they notice it moving. Crinoids are not the passive ornaments they appear to be — they actively crawl across the reef surface to position themselves in the strongest current, and are capable of swimming short distances by rhythmically beating their arms. The first time a guest sees this, they almost always grab my arm. It is a movement of genuine, unexpected grace. On any guided snorkel or dive, I'll make sure you see it.

Their colours are one of the things I find myself photographing every month without quite meaning to: vivid red, black and yellow, intricately banded combinations that stop you and make you look again. What reads as pure beauty is, in fact, chemical armour — a warning encoded in pigment across hundreds of millions of years of evolution. Beauty here is not incidental. It is a strategy.

This month, with the reef in some of the best condition I've recorded since arriving at Kodhipparu, feather starfish have been more active and more widespread than I'd typically expect. High on the coral, arms fully extended, reaching into the current — it's one of the clearest signs I know that a reef is genuinely thriving. Come and see for yourself. Join me on the house reef any morning or afternoon. Please contact your lifestyle host to reserve a session.



GRACE'S FAVOURITE

Every month I choose one species from the reef that I've been particularly drawn to — not necessarily the rarest, not always the most dramatic, but the one that's made me stop and look differently at where I am. This month, without hesitation: the Longfin Batfish. There is nothing else on this reef quite like it, and I know exactly where to find it.

The individual I've been watching this season stands apart even among its own kind. Its colouring is unusually dark — almost black, a sharp departure from the silver tones most batfish wear. Its fins are frayed and irregular at the edges, bearing marks that speak not of damage but of history. This is an old fish. One that has survived everything this reef has thrown at it, and kept going. I find something quietly extraordinary about that.

What makes the batfish especially endearing is its behavior. Unlike most reef fish, which keep a careful distance from divers and snorkelers, the batfish is famously bold and intensely curious. It will approach, circle, and sometimes follow swimmers at close range — seemingly as interested in us as we are in it. There is something quietly moving about an animal so unguarded, so willing to hold a stranger's gaze.

As juveniles, batfish are even more remarkable — their fins almost comically oversized, drifting near the seafloor mimicking toxic flatworms and dead leaves, hiding in plain sight. As they mature, the disguise is shed, and what emerges is the confident, unhurried adult I see on this reef every month. The older ones — the darker, more weathered individuals like this month's favourite — carry something else entirely. A worn, weathered appearance that speaks of age and resilience rather than youth.

Seeing a batfish here is not something to take for granted. Their presence here signals something specific: structural complexity, clean water, and the kind of ecological shelter that only a genuinely healthy, well-protected reef can provide. Meeting one — especially this one — is less a tick on a checklist and more a conversation. Join me on a guided snorkel and I'll take you to where it tends to be. The encounter is not guaranteed. But in my experience, this particular fish is very hard to miss.

Batfish (*Platax teira*)



*“The batfish is famously bold
and intensely curious,
approaching swimmers as though
equally interested in us.”*

LIVING THIS MONTH AT KODHIPPARU

What a July morning looks like here

You wake early — earlier than you thought you would — because the light through the water panel is doing something extraordinary, and the silence outside is the kind that only exists somewhere with no traffic, no sirens, no city. You pull on a swimsuit and step off the deck before breakfast. The water in July is cool enough to wake you and warm enough to keep you.

The Spa is another kind of immersion entirely. I always recommend guests book a treatment mid-morning time. The overwater treatment rooms are at their quietest, and the light on the lagoon at that hour is unlike anything you'll find later in the day. The Coconut Journey is worth asking about: a grounding, full-body ritual using cold-pressed coconut oil sourced from the region. The ocean runs underneath everything in that room. Most guests don't fall asleep so much as dissolve.

Afternoons here open up in the best way. Join me on a guided reef snorkel and I'll take you to the parts of the house reef that most guests never find on their own — the feather starfish on the eastern side, the coral garden at the drop-off edge, the places where the light bends through the water in a way that makes you understand why people dedicate their lives to studying this. By evening, the sunsets in June are long and slow. The kind that make it genuinely difficult to go inside. My suggestion: don't.

For more information and bookings, please feel free to contact your lifestyle host.



How to spend a July week



Start in the water. Join me in a guided reef experience in the morning at 9.00AM. I've found that once guests understand what they're looking at — not just "fish" and "coral" but the ecological relationships, the behaviours, the stories behind each species — the reef becomes something entirely different. Most guests tell me it's the experience they think about most when they get home.



Join me for Reef Talk every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon from 4:00PM at the beach club — an evening session where I share the month's most significant sightings, reef health updates, and what I'm hoping to find next. It's one of my favourite hours of the week.



And leave at least one morning entirely unplanned. You are on a private island surrounded by one of the most biodiverse reef systems in the Indian Ocean. It doesn't need an itinerary.



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Until next month...

Continue to Connect with Nature through the reef, the lagoon
and the quiet moments between.

#ConnectToNature