

## Interested in a marine ecology project on the coral reefs of New Caledonia?

### Honours Project: Call for expressions of interest

#### Growth and long-term movement of the golden sandfish *Holothuria lessoni* (Holothuroidea)

Tropical sea cucumbers are exploited worldwide, as luxury seafood exports to dried seafood markets in Asia. The basic biology and ecology of some species is understudied, limiting decisions for fisheries management and conservation.



The golden sandfish (*Holothuria lessoni*) is one of the most-valuable of all tropical sea cucumbers. It attains a large size, to about 2 kg in weight, and has a wide distribution from east Africa to the central Pacific. It is harvested by tens of thousands of fishers in low income countries. Owing to its low abundance in most localities, few studies have been conducted on this species.

An abundant population of the golden sandfish exists in marine reserves off Noumea, New Caledonia. Animals will be georeferenced, photographically marked and weighed in 2023. The Honours student will work with the SCU supervisor to relocate individuals in April 2024 and re-identify and re-weigh them. The student will apply standard models to determine growth rates and age-at-maximum-size and will use the georeferenced waypoints to assess mobility of animals across different sizes.

The student will need to possess the following:

#### *Academic*

- Ability to collect data, manage data in MS-Excel and conduct statistical analyses
- Evidence of excellent writing skills and desire to write the work for publication

#### *Diving*

- A very good level of physical fitness
- Ability to conduct work snorkelling for long periods in shallow depths

#### *Travel*

- A valid passport and ability to travel overseas

Desirable:

- Valid Senior First Aid, Oxygen Therapy and CPR certificates
- French language skills

The student will need to commence the Honours program in Session 1 of 2024. For further information and to lodge your expression of interest, contact Assoc.-Prof. Steven Purcell, National Marine Science Centre, SCU. [steven.purcell@scu.edu.au](mailto:steven.purcell@scu.edu.au)