

Ocean awards: Yacht of the year

BELUGA is crowned Yacht of the Year in the Ocean Awards

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA:

M/Y BELUGA, a 34.7-metre Moonen based in Port Douglas Queensland, has been crowned Yacht of the Year in Boat International's Ocean Awards for 2021. The award, in its first year, is recognition of BELUGA's Owner and crew's efforts to survey and protect the marine ecosystem as part of the Great Reef Census.

BELUGA was entered by charter management company, Ocean Alliance and the submission highlighted the Owner's commitment to ocean conservation and pioneering the way forward for the superyacht industry, embodied by [Ocean Alliance](#) as 'Yachting for Purpose'.

Specifically, the Owners donated utilization of the yacht to Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef's scientists. They completed necessary surveys, testing of new equipment, and piloted research and development which supported the inaugural Great Reef Census to become a pioneering and scalable approach to assessing reef health.

"We would like to congratulate Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef and the Owners and crew of BELUGA for their leadership in marine conservation and their positive contribution to the very region in which they charter" stated Ocean Alliance's Managing Director, Mr Joachim Howard.

"This award represents a clear example of how Owners and Charter guests can participate in the monitoring & preservation of the marine environments they are

experiencing,” continued Mr Howard.

Mr Howard explained, “Ocean Alliance partnered with Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef, several years ago with a combined interest to connect the superyacht industry with citizen science initiatives such as the Great Reef Census. When in 2020 a vessel was required to assist with testing new technology ahead of the first Census, it was only natural for us to approach BELUGA as the Owners are actively involved in ocean conservation.”

In late 2020, on a leg post-charter from Cairns to Lizard Island in Queensland’s far north, Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef spent valuable time onboard BELUGA testing equipment and surveying priority reefs. It was the first time equipment had been applied in a real-world application and BELUGA the first superyacht to be involved in the Census.

What is the great reef census?

The ambition of the Great Reef Census is to capture reconnaissance data in the form of images from across the entire length of the Great Barrier Reef, up to 40% of which has never been surveyed previously. This data will help researchers and managers better understand how the reef is changing year-on-year under climate change.

The Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef team developed a model and technology which would allow any vessel to upload survey images of the reef to a central source from remote offshore locations. Over 13,000 images were uploaded to the Great Reef Census website for researchers, regulators, governments, students and ordinary citizen scientists anywhere in the world to analyse, view and study.

“The Great Barrier Reef is close to 3000 individual coral reefs stretching over 2300 km, an area larger than Germany. Utilizing the assets already out on the reef every day to support critical research and critical monitoring will become

even more important in the coming years” stated Mr Ridley.

Mr Ridley continued, “The support we received from Ocean Alliance and the Owner and crew of BELUGA was invaluable. It gave us a chance to pilot important new technology which was critical to the successful roll-out of the Census. We hope the Award will encourage more superyacht Owners and Charter guests to be part of this exciting project in 2021.”

Involvement

BELUGA’s involvement in marine conservation extends beyond Australian waters to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to include supporting a turtle sanctuary in the Conflict Islands, Take 3 for the Sea and supporting the production of conservation documentary, BLUE. These are not activities removed from their charter season yet integrated into the guests’ experience whilst on charter.

“Our charter guests are looking for yachting experiences with deeper meaning and BELUGA is the leader in this field,” continued Mr Howard.

“Involvement in the Great Reef Census is easily incorporated into an itinerary and we would encourage charter guests, crew, and owners, to participate,” offered Mr Howard.

“It is a simple way of contributing and protecting the precious element that makes superyacht charter so exceptional. At Ocean Alliance, we support Yachting for Purpose and feel there is a huge opportunity for Superyachts to be involved in these citizen-science initiatives,” adds Laurie Foulon, Charter Experience Manager.

The inaugural Great Reef Census has just closed, capturing over 13,000 images across 690 reef sites from the far north to the remote Swains. s. Between October and December 2021, the Census aims to reach and survey even more of the GBR and Ocean Alliance welcomes enquiries from superyachts, owners, charter

guests and scientists who wish to be involved.





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