

As the largest archipelagic country in the world, Indonesia's marine resources are abundant. One of which is our favorite food: fish! In various regions, fish is cooked with various methods and local spices to make it more tasteful. Besides its delight and nutrition, the presence of fish is also very crucial in aquatic ecosystems. One of the important fish species is coral reef fish, which was researched by Yan Zakeus Numberi, a 9th-semester student of the Faculty of Marine and Fisheries, University of Papua, at the 2020 Young Papuan Scientist research competition.

Coming from the city of Serui, Yapen Islands Regency, Papua Province, this young man was born in 1996 and loves to play basketball. In addition, he also has the vision to lead and manage marine waters, especially fisheries, for ecological sustainability and increasing the welfare of the locals. The dream motivated him to study coral reef fish in the waters of Mount Botak and Yembekiri Village, South Manokwari Regency, West Papua. But, anyway, what exactly is a coral reef fish?

"The coral reef fish (Pomacentridae) is one of the species which is associated with coral reefs. These fish respond to changing conditions that occur in coral reef ecosystems through their communities, hence the presence of coral reef fish can be used as a parameter to assess the health of coral reef ecosystems," said Yan. Furthermore, he explained that the coral reef fish are a very important part of the coral reef ecosystem. This is because coral reef fish helps to maintain a balance between the various components of the coral reef ecosystem.

From August to October 2020, Yan observed coral communities in the waters of Mount Botak and Yembekiri Village using the Underwater Visual Census (UVC) method, namely by using a roll meter that is stretched along 50 meters above the coral reef fish colony, placed horizontally with the shoreline. Meanwhile, to collect data on coral reefs, Yan used the Point Intercept Transect (PIT) method, which is similar to the UVC method. To get a comprehensive result, In addition to observing coral reef fish and coral reefs, Yan also measured the waters' physical and chemical characteristics, including measurements of temperature, salinity, pH level, current speed, and brightness.

Yan's research shows encouraging results. He found that the coral reefs at the two research sites were in good condition, with coverage ranging from 63.50 to 70.50 percent. The abundance of coral reef fish there is also high, reaching 329 individuals. In addition, the relationship between the proportion of coral coverage and coral reef fish population in both locations is worth 97, which means strong and positive. Therefore, we can conclude that the coral ecosystem in Mount Botak and Yembekiri Village is sustainable. Hip hip hooray!

According to Yan, the research on coral reef fish must still be continued. He believes that there is still a lot of things that we can explore about coral reef fish species and coral reef ecosystems, especially in Papua. Yan wants to invite other Papuan youths to participate in studying the extraordinary sea of Papua. Interesting, right? Let's explore the marine world of the Land of Papua by becoming a Young Papuan Scientist!