

Cambodia Reef Conservation Project (CRCP)



Monthly Project Update

December 2013

Location:

Prek Svey Village, KohRong, Sihanoukville, Cambodia

Project Scientist: Rónán Mag Aoidh



CRCP Project Aim

The Cambodia Reef Conservation Project (CRCP) is a collaborative project surveying the coral reefs of Koh Rong and Koh Rong Sanloem Islands in the Municipality of Sihanoukville. The programme provides training and conservation education opportunities for local Cambodians as part of an integrated programme to develop local capacity, and to ensure the long-term protection and sustainable use of marine resources throughout the region. Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) is working at the invitation of, and in partnership with, the Fisheries Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

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Latest News

We close up for the Christmas holidays on 20th December 2013 and open again on 6th January 2014. It's been a productive and enjoyable year, and we managed to make good progress on our work. This month we said goodbye to two of our volunteers Nancy Burrell and Tara Arnott, who will be sadly missed. Enjoy the rest of your Gap Year!



CCC personnel prepare to leave for the Christmas break

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L-R: Elena Bolatti (Science Officer) and the Philippines Staff – Josephine Cheng, Jackie Dodd & Julia Herbolsheimer (with the driver and their luggage) all ready for their journey

Our three Philippines staff also left after having spent the last month helping us out on the CRCP. Their expertise and experience have proven to be highly valuable and they were able to contribute to our work here. They will fly back to the Philippines and help with getting the site back up and running in the New Year. Best of luck!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers who devoted their time and efforts to this project over 2013. With your hard work and assistance, we were able to complete many surveys around the Koh Rong Archipelago, help raise environmental awareness in the local village, join in the fight against pollution with our beach clean ups; and not to mention have many laughs and fun times.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from everyone at Coral Cay Conservation in Cambodia!

Survey Update

Survey background: Our baseline-surveying programme is designed to gather data about the biological and morphological standing of Koh Rong and Koh Rong Sanloem Islands. This data is combined with information on human and natural impacts on the reefs, along with oceanographic data, to ultimately produce a Geographical Information System 'map' of the various habitats of the islands. It is like a 'stock-take' of the current marine resources. This will provide policymakers and concerned institutions with information necessary to effectively manage those resources. We are also monitoring the reefs for signs of bleaching, following the mass bleaching event in 2010.

In our last MPU, staff and volunteers were preparing for a camping trip to survey some of the more distant sites around Koh Rong. We awoke when it was still dark, and witnessed a particularly beautiful sunrise while we ate breakfast. Then the boat was loaded and we set off into the morning light.

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Moving along the shoreline, we cruised past alternatively sandy beaches and rocky outcrops, with rainforest stretching up the hills in the distance. At one stage we saw a troop of monkeys out on some rocks for a morning stroll.

We arrived at our destination, the aptly named 'five mile beach', and dropped our chef off with all our gear to prepare our lunch. We would set up camp there, but first we had to complete our first survey of the day.

This was our base for three days and two nights, with our kitchen, sleeping quarters and our office! Sleeping just off a beautiful sandy beach, we were afforded a spectacular view of the night sky and the gentle waves lulled us into a deep sleep.



Elena Bolatti (SO) working hard in the temporary office during the camping trip

Afterwards we glided home exhausted, but having completed six surveys. A lot of work was involved, but it was an enjoyable experience for everyone. In the following week we managed to survey a further nine sites, and so successfully completed our goal of finishing the surveying of Koh Rong by Christmas!

In 2014 we will be aiming to complete a second round of survey around the nearby island of Koh Rong Sanlom.

Marine Creature of the Month

Common Name: Cobia
Rachycentron canadum

Family: Rachycentridae



These fish are mostly solitary animals but we managed to spot seven of them together close to Koh Rong. They can grow quite big, up to 183cm, and weigh up to 68kg! Indeed from a distance it could be mistaken for a shark, which is what we initially thought they might be, but after getting a better look, we could relax with the realisation that they were just the harmless, but still impressive cobia.

Learn More!

To learn more about the CCC Cambodia project, to join the expedition, or to find out about local Marine Scholarships, visit www.coralcay.org.