

Cambodia Reef Conservation Project (CRCP)



Monthly Project Update

April 2014

Location:

Prek Svey Village, Koh Rong, 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

This month we said goodbye to our two scholars On Chanthy and Yim Raksmeay. They had been onsite since February to gather data for their master's thesis. Chanthy's work is a socioeconomic study which involved interviewing local fishermen in the village with a questionnaire. Raksmeay is looking at the issue of sedimentation around the islands. To accomplish this he laid some sedimentation traps at different locations to record the level of sedimentation. Raksmeay arrived on the island having never dived before, but left a qualified PADI Advanced Open Water Diver with over 70 logged dives. Both are now writing up their results for submission.



CCC scholar, On Chanthy, ready to leave the island

This is what Raksmei had to say about his time spent with CCC:

"I study biodiversity conservation at Royal University of Phnom Penh. I have been interested in researching a marine topic and chose the issue of sedimentation and coral reef health for my thesis. I got a scholarship from Coral Cay Cambodia, so arrived on Koh Rong on 6th February. Two days after I arrived at the CCC base, I started my SCUBA diving training. I experienced some difficulty at first; however my diving ability improved from day to day due to the really nice teachers. They paid attention and helped me a lot. I also took part in the science training along with the other volunteers, which includes the Reef Check course where I had to learn fishes, invertebrates, and substrates. After almost one month I finished all my training and exams. Moreover, I had a chance to do real surveys alongside the other CCC's volunteers, and was also able to conduct my own research during this time.



CCC scholar, Yim Raksmei, on one of the survey trips to Koh Rong Sanloem

CCC supported me during my time here, providing me with accommodation, food and all my training and equipment. Moreover, I met a lot of friendly and kind people. All staff and volunteers lived in one house and we always had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together, which is why I feel close with all of them; we are like a big family! Thus, I had a lot of fun!

I now want to use my SCUBA diving for the benefit of my own country and the world. I would like to become a marine researcher, especially with coral reefs, and I also want to be involved with organizations that work with marine ecosystems, to conserve the marine environment."

Story of the Month

Traditional Khmer New Year occurs every April and this year it fell over 13-15th April. During this time of celebration it is customary for people to spend the day before the festival cleaning their homes, to encourage good luck in the year ahead.

With the idea of extending this tradition to cover the beach around Prek Svey village, CCC organised a beach clean-up on 12th April. Community Liaison Officer, Chhim Volux, started the day by giving an environmental themed lesson which identified different types of rubbish, and how to properly dispose of it by not dropping litter and recycling where possible.

Armed with this new knowledge, and lots of sacks and gloves, many local children, CCC staff, and Saran (of the Song Saa Foundation) walked along the beach collecting and sorting all the rubbish they could find. By the end we had collected 27 sacks of rubbish.



Some of the kids who took part in the beach clean, pictured with PS Rónán Mag Aoidh, SI Amy Hornett and Saran (SSF)

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.

Due to the incredible effort and commitment of all CCC volunteers and staff this month, we succeeded in finishing our second round of all the survey sites in the Koh Rong Archipelago. The last month or two involved various trips down to KRS which were very productive. The data has been entered into the database and analysis is underway.

This data will be used to advise policy makers during the MFMA creation process and to help suggest zoning boundaries in the proposed MFMA.

Marine Creature of the Month!

***Chelmon rostratus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**
Long Beaked Coral Butterfly fish

Family: Chaetodontidae

This species is quite common in the waters around the Koh Rong archipelago. They are found singly or more often, in pairs, along rocky shores, coral reefs, and in estuaries. They are a territorial species and monogamous, forming pairs during breeding times. Our Medical Officer, Sue-Ling Armour, photographed this couple on a dive around Koh Rong Sanloem. They can easily be identified by the yellow bands and their long snout.

Although individuals demonstrate commitment to each other, they show no such devotion to their offspring. Instead, they scatter their eggs, with fertilisation taking place externally, and the juveniles are left to fend for themselves!



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.