



Swimming with Whale Sharks in the Philippines!

The Philippines staff and volunteers grabbed the opportunity to snorkel with the Whale Sharks in Sonok, Southern Leyte this week! These massive beautiful fish make their way through Southern Leyte between the months of November and April, and Sonok boasts the biggest aggregation of Whale Sharks in the whole of Asia! Our site is very luckily placed being a mere half an hour away from Sonok by boat!

The Whale Shark with its rather distinctive markings of spots and stripes has got to be one of the most recognisable creatures in the Indo-Pacific region. Scientists do not yet know for sure what purpose the pattern serves but there are a few theories. Firstly, that the pattern is an evolutionary trait from Carpet Sharks, a relative of the Whale Shark. Secondly, that they are used for social behaviour displays or individual recognition. Last but not least that they act as a sort of shield, protecting the shark from UV rays: important for a species that spends so many hours near the surface of the ocean.

Known as a tiki-tiki in local dialect, Visayan, this is the one species that if spotted off site creates an instant rearranging of the schedule to allow everyone to jump into the water! If you would like to have the chance to see these majestic creatures [book on now!](#)



The students ready to see the beauty of the reefs for themselves!



The critically endangered Montserrat Oriole.

Philippines

The site was filled with the sounds of laughter and cheering last weekend with the arrival of a group of 10 students from Himayangan High School, who had been specially chosen to take part in the Reef Rangers program. This educational day is aimed at introducing the students to coral reefs and the conservation efforts that protect them.

After a lesson on coral reef biology and some tips and tricks for recognising some of Southern Leyte's most common species, the students jumped into the water for their first ever snorkel session! The students did a great job of pointing out some of the marine creatures discussed in the lesson. The students then designed and presented a poster on their favourite marine creature. After receiving their certificates the students headed home and will hopefully spread the message of conserving our oceans even farther afield!

Montserrat

The first group of volunteers of the year have now arrived on site and are busy getting stuck into their [Skills Development Program](#) and assisting on terrestrial surveys. On one of their recent bird surveys the volunteers spotted Pearly-eyed Thrashers, the fantastically named Bananaquits, and even saw the elusive Montserrat Oriole, the critically endangered national bird of Montserrat!

Although it is not possible to dive in Montserrat until the end of March (due to the high swell) the work continues and CCC head office were very pleased to be able to send out the Montserrat Marine Survey Report last week. This Report is the culmination of all of the marine work carried out by CCC staff and volunteers since the establishment of the project in 2013. If you would like to read the report just head on over to the [Science Reports](#) page.

The Lifesigns Group

Coral Cay Conservation is part of the [Lifesigns Group](#), a group of companies specialising in expeditions, medical training & hostile environment solutions.

It's been a busy day at Head Office today as Lifesigns hold a faculty day for 'Expedition Care Program' (ECP) trainers. ECP is the first aid course taught on CCC sites. It is an intense course which teaches individuals the skills needed to tackle emergency medical situations in the field. First aid is a constantly evolving field and therefore it's very important that those teaching the course have the most up to date information on current practises. For instance did you know that there are new protocols in place for how to rule out spinal injuries? To find out more about the first aid courses that Medical Lifesigns run check out www.medicallifesigns.co.uk.

Offer of the month!

It was a pleasure to meet some of you at the London International Dive Show. By signing up to our newsletter your name was automatically added into our grand prize draw to win a free 4 week expedition (the winner will be able to choose from 4 weeks as a marine volunteer in the Philippines or 4 weeks as a terrestrial volunteer in Montserrat). We will announce the winner of this competition in the April edition of our newsletter.

Check out next month's newsletter for a new offer of the month.

NB. This offer does not include flights, insurance, VISA costs (where applicable), personal spending money or personal expedition kit (please see the CCC Expedition Guide for further information). Volunteers must be over 18 years of age and medically fit to partake in an expedition. CCC's standard booking terms and conditions will apply. The expedition must be booked before Birmingham DIVE 2015 and the start date must take place within 1 year after booking. This offer cannot be combined with any other offers.