
Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
September 2016

Location: Napantao Dive Resort, Napantao, San Francisco, Southern Leyte

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LRCP Project Aim

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP) is a collaborative project to protect the coral reefs of Sogod Bay, providing training and conservation education opportunities for local Filipinos, as part of an integrated programme to develop local capacity and 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 Provincial Government of Southern Leyte (PGSL). CCC provides the resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests.

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Latest News

CCC welcomes Jamie Parker, Project Scientist



Jamie's lifelong passion for marine biology was established during his early travels to the Seychelles, snorkelling in the tropical waters whilst visiting his Seychelloise grandmother. Since completing his MSc in Tropical Marine Biology, Jamie has worked with UK anti-shark finning organisation, Fin Fighters, leading the promotional components for the charity's campaigns and the first ever UK Sharkfest in 2016. His academic research focused on the resilience and acclimatory characteristics of hard coral species, an area he feels will become increasingly important when constructing conservation plans for the world's coral reefs in the future. As a qualified Divemaster, Jamie has been involved in extended research excursions to Cambodia and Sulawesi, where he developed his understanding for a wide range of marine survey techniques and furthered his identification skills.

Story of the Month

Anislagon conservation community day

On September 27th eight CCC associates including five staff members travelled to Anislagon to run a community day. The day aimed to highlight the importance of marine conservation in relation to their community, while also taking them through the CCC findings relating to a new proposed MPA site on the Anislagon coast.

To begin the day, around 30 members of the Anislagon community warmed up by playing a few rounds of charades and a site scavenger hunt. CCC's Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay then began scientific proceedings with an introductory coral reef lecture, which was followed by two further talks by Project Scientists Darienne Lancaster and Jamie Parker, which described threats to coral reefs, ecosystem food chains, coral lifeforms and MPAs. Other games including the newly created 'blindfold' food-chain game was also met with approval, before a beach and site clean lead up to lunch.

Following the food break Darienne presented the recent CCC survey results and explained why Anislagon's proposed site would make an ideal area for an MPA. Members of the community were interested in the findings and encouraged by the future possibilities.



(Top) CLO, Jesse Tinapay giving a coral reef lecture, (Bottom) while Anislagon locals get to grips with CCC's new 'blindfold' food-chain game. Photos D. Lancaster

Education and Community Projects

Napantao teacher's community day



Project Scientists Darienne Lancaster and Jamie Parker with the Napantao teachers before the Napantao house reef snorkel session – Photo D. Lancaster

On September 17th the Napantao elementary school teachers were invited to the CCC site for a community day, with the aim to help promote the importance of coral reef conservation, as well as useful information regarding coral and fish lifeforms.

After a brief introduction to the CCC site, the guests were shown a series of lectures, presented by Project Scientists Darienne and Jamie, as well as Field Base Manager Intern Gareth, detailing the conservation role CCC plays in the area, information on coral growth forms, fish identification and dangerous marine flora and fauna.

Proceeding this, three of the guests were eager to get in the water, so were accompanied by the Project Scientists for a snorkel on the Napantao house reef. Whilst Gareth and Jesse joined the rest of the teachers for a beach clean. Overall, the guests were enthusiastic

and engaging throughout. We hope this experience may help encourage their pupils to attend on a later date.

Marayag Sea Stars introductory lecture

Community Liason Officer Jesse Tinapay continued his rounds of ocean education in Marayag, San Francisco on September 9th. Jesse gave the first of three Sea Stars lessons on coral reef biology to grade seven students at Marayag elementary school. The students watched parts of the documentary Blue Planet, learned that corals are animals, not plants, and many more fishy facts.

Jesse will be heading back to Marayag for lesson two on September 17th for more lectures on our oceans. Once the students complete all three lessons and complete a marine conservation activity they will be certified as gold level Sea Stars and be invited to a Reef Rangers event on our Napantao base. Great job Marayag!



Jesse Tinapay (CLO) teaching grade seven students in Marayag elementary school about coral reefs and the oceans – Photo J. Tinapay

Survey Monthly Update

Survey background: Since January 2013, survey efforts have been focused on assessing potential and existing Marine Protected Areas in Sogod Bay to provide appropriate management recommendations. To do this CCC uses an expanded version of the Reef Check protocol, which has been customised to perfectly fit our work in Sogod Bay. Prior to this a baseline appraisal of marine resources in Sogod Bay was carried out. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientists, Jamie Parker and Darienne Lancaster.

On September 13th the Coral Cay survey team headed out to Barangay Catig in the municipality of Liloan to conduct a visual assessment for a proposed marine reserve for lobster in the area.

Coral Cay Conservation completed a proposed MPA survey in Catig in August 2015 and the ordinance for that MPA is currently being developed. This additional visual assessment was requested by the Local Government Unit (LGU) in Liloan, which is interested in creating a marine reserve (MR) around the proposed MPA to protect lobsters, which are often found in the Catig area.

The Coral Cay survey team did a full 100m transect survey in the proposed MR area to check for coral, fish, and invertebrate abundance. Additionally, the surveyors snorkelled the entire shoreline in the proposed area checking for lobster and lobster habitat.

Many small reef lobster were seen in holes during the survey in shallow sandy substrates between rocks. Overall the area appears to have very good habitat for reef lobsters and would likely make an excellent reef lobster marine reserve. However, no ornate or spiny lobster, typically harvested for food, were seen in the area.

Scientific reports from all of CCC's sites around the world are available on our website at <http://www.coralcay.org/science-research/scientific-reports>

Photos from Catig proposed MPA Lobster sanctuary in Liloan.



Marine Scholarship News

Each month CCC offers Filipino nationals who display an ambition to study and protect the vital marine ecosystems of the Philippines an opportunity to take part in our Marine Conservation Scholarship. The programme lasts for one month and involves training in SCUBA diving to the level of PADI Advanced Open Water. Scholars then take part in an intensive Skills Development Programme giving them the knowledge and expertise to conduct sub-marine surveys of the coastline.

This month we are introducing our scholar, Ion Bacabac. Ion comes from Los Banos, Laguna, and works as a research assistant for a fish monitoring project that uses Scuba divers to count reef fish. He hopes to carry on his CCC exploits with a career in environmental conservation.

If you would like to apply for the CCC Marine Conservation Scholarship programme or read more about it, please visit: <http://www.coralcay.org/volunteer/scholarship-opportunities/>

"I have always been fascinated by the beauty I see underwater – the fishes, the creatures associated with the reefs. Coral Cay Conservation provides further training to hone my skills in identifying marine life forms and conducting scientific surveys – the things essential to a budding field biologist. Life in Napantao, Southern Leyte provides a 'back to basics' lifestyle, giving you a certain 'outdoor camping feel' which offers you the feeling to reunite with nature. In addition, being able to work and interact with a diverse group of people is a worthwhile opportunity to strengthen my connections, particularly with experts linked to marine conservation. I would love to share the entire experience to everyone who is interested in lending a hand in saving the Philippines' diverse coral reefs. Let's all appreciate our marine life and save our coral reefs, in this way, we secure the beauty of nature to the future generations."



Ion Bacabac

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Orange-lined triggerfish** (*Balistapus undulates*). One of our scholars this month will never forget this reef dwelling critter, as he witnessed one gobble up his lost denture while SCUBA diving!

These territorial fish have a feisty reputation and some triggerfish species have been known to be ill-tempered towards divers encroaching on their nests. Triggerfish territories are shaped like an upside down cone, divers are therefore advised to swim sideways rather than upwards, in order to leave triggerfish's area safely. These fish acquired their name, owing to a 'trigger' like dorsal fin that erects itself when they feel threatened.

A triggerfish's broad diet can consist of coral, algae, sponges, crabs, urchins, worms and even smaller fish, while the Titan triggerfish (the largest of all triggerfish species) can grow to as large as 2.5ft!



Learn More!

To learn more about the CCC Philippines project, to join the expedition, or to find out about local marine scholarships, visit www.coralcay.org