

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
October 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 progress report and Memorandum of Agreement meeting, Maasin](#)



On October 3rd both Project Scientists, Jamie Parker and Darienne Lancaster, as well as Field Base Manager, Claire Ogg, were invited to a council meeting encompassing the yearly progress of CCC and the current memorandum of agreement. Those who attended included Hon. Jessica Escano, Sir Armando Gaviola of PENRMO, Southern Leyte tourism representative Sir Nedgar V. Garvez and Vice Governor Coco. The meeting began with a short presentation by Project Scientist, Jamie Parker; giving an overview of CCC's conservation exploits, detailing work done to establish MPAs and updates on the Seastars

and Filipino scholarship programmes. The progress report was met with approval and all those in attendance agreed that CCC's ongoing contributions to Southern Leyte's environmental and tourism sectors, were invaluable for the municipality's development.

Stories of the Month

Marayag High School Reef Rangers Day

On October 8th CCC held a Reef Rangers activity day for the Marayag high school at CCC's Napantao base. After a quick introductory tour of the base, the students eased into proceedings with a game of fish charades. This was followed by some coral reef conservation lectures, depicting the basics of coral and fish biology, presented by Projects Scientists, Jamie Parker and Darianne Lancaster.

After giving the students a taste of what Filipino reefs have to offer, they were all taken for a snorkel session with the assistance of CCC scholars, Victor Vilero and Chris Cruz, as well as volunteer, Andrew Miklas, and Field Base Manager Claire Ogg. Many of the students had never experienced coral reefs in the flesh, and it clearly peaked their interests further for the rest of the day. CCC's Scuba instructor, Charlie Eve, led a game of 'slap the answer' straight after lunch, which lead on to the final lectures of the day based on the topics of marine food-chains, threats and MPAs. To end the day students enjoyed a few rounds of the 'blindfold food-chain challenge', followed by a 'defend your (egg) MPA' finale. Two successfully defended MPA's epitomised the end to a great day.



Project Scientists, Jamie Parker and Darianne Lancaster, posing with Maryags' newly certified Reef Rangers – Photo. Jamie Parker

Coral Cay Conservation Uwan Uwanan gorge excursion

On October 9th five members of the CCC team explored the Uwan Uwanan Gorge in Southern Leyte, accompanied by their Filipino tour guides, Glen and Gage.

Setting off at about 10.30am the group scaled waterfalls, climbed through crevices and waded through rivers, while surrounded by some of the best rainforests Southern Leyte has to offer. Although every member spent almost the whole day soaked to the bone, the spirit amongst the group was high throughout, with many surprising themselves with their waterfall climbing abilities. The day drew to a close at around 4pm with everyone feeling exhausted. There is no doubt that this day will live long in the memory for all those who were lucky enough to be involved, and reminded everyone of Southern Leyte's diverse and exciting landscapes.



Janie Morton (SO), Darianne Lancaster (PS), Jamie Parker (PS), Gareth Turner (FBMI) and Claire Ogg (FBM) pose for a picture with guide Glen after a hard days gorging – Photo. Claire Ogg

Education and Community Projects

Estela MPA Proposal Results Presentation

On October 20th Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, and Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, travelled to Estela to present the results for the survey findings collected by CCC associates during 2016, in support for a proposed MPA off Estela's coast.



Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, presents the findings for the Estela proposed MPA to the Estela Barangay officials - Photo. Jesse Tinapay

While the majority of the Estela community were unable to attend for the day's activities, all the Estela Barangay representatives were present and eager to find out what CCC had been up to. Project

Scientist, Jamie Parker, took the attendees through the results, explaining the reef structure, fish and coral diversity, and the anthropogenic impacts associated with Estela's proposed MPA. Following this, the benefits for establishing the proposed MPA were set down, which encouraged questions and positive discussions on the subject. Barangay Captain Nelia was quick to enquire about the MPAs legislative logistics, but seemed enthused with the potential plans set ahead. We hope that the work conducted by CCC will be the push needed to help establish a new protected area on Estela's more than worthy reef.

Napantao Elementary Sea Stars introductory lecture

On October 6th Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, and Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, visited the Napantao Elementary School. Approximately fifteen 3rd and 4th year students were there to experience their first taste of CCC's Seastars programme.



The Napantao students show that they know that corals are animals and not plants – Photo. Jamie Parker

Jesse Tinapay touched on the basic fundamentals of marine conservation, coral biology and the importance of the world's coral reefs. Following this hour long talk the children were asked questions regarding some of the facts they had learned, and answered in a competitive but friendly manner. The Napantao children while only young, showed a genuine interest in the topics being taught and were excited about the prospect of their next lecture in the week to come.

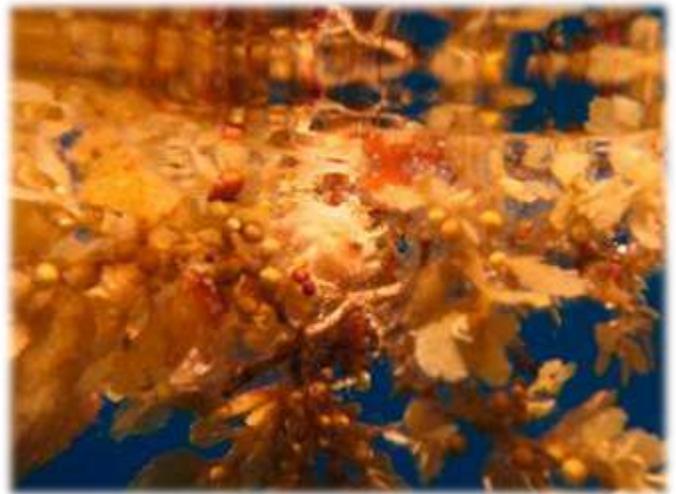
Survey Monthly Update

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 Scientist, Jamie Parker.

The month of October saw CCC staff, volunteers and scholars carry out the second set of monitoring surveys on Napantao's MPA. The first collection of data was collected earlier in the year during the month of April and will be collated with October's data to give a general overview of the MPAs progress over 2016.

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 Napantao MPA in San Francisco.



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 scholars, Nikka Alonso and Carmella Novilla. Nikka comes from Bacolod City and completed her BSc in Tourism Management, with the hope to carry on her CCC exploits with a career in environmental conservation. Carmella is a BA Political Science – History graduate from Iloilo City, who hopes to get involved in marine governance and resource management.

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/>



"A rewarding gratifying and fulfilling experience you shouldn't miss out. For those of you who are passionate about conservation, the ocean and for the curious adventurous minds you will not regret joining Coral Cay. This is also one of the best ways of learning about Philippines, our culture and ecosystem! This experience is a remarkably unique way of making a difference to help and protect the ocean. I would also like to thank the top-notch staff of Coral Cay for taking care of us and sharing us their skills and knowledge and for accommodating us in your home. Also for the captivating people I met, I will miss you all! Of course Shrimpy, Corallimorph and all the animals with a name Dave; Dave the woffalo, Dave the Hawk's Bill sea turtle, you will surely be missed. Much love and gratitude."

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Nikka Alonso



"I had the most amazing experience at CCC. Things just felt surreal sometimes the only thing to say is "aaww!" and "woahh!". I think I did gain what I set myself out to do- to learn and be qualified to apply these practices in the hopes of creating something concrete for my country. Simultaneously, having experienced and met all of the passionate people at the base allowed me to affirm my own values and beliefs about the environment, about living consciously and working hard and even why dogs are the best. This became possible through Coral Cay and their continued commitment to help save our underwater resources through science and education. I am very much indebted to the organization, and to all the staff and volunteers who put time and resources to make this program happen. I can only hope everyone continued success and more dedicated scholars in the future."

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Carmella Novilla

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Marbled stargazer** (*Uranoscopus bicinctus*). Some of the CCC personnel were fortunate enough to see this sinister looking bottom-dweller on a recent night dive in Sogod Bay.

Stargazers acquired their name due to their sky facing eyes which can often be spotted when buried in the sand. These ambush predators also have a peculiar upwards facing mouth, allowing them to pounce on fish and invertebrates that may unwittingly pass over its patient gaze.

All stargazer species possess venomous spines for protection against predators, while species within the genera *Uranoscopus* can also cause electric shocks, making them some of the few bioelectrogenic bony fishes on the planet.

Owing to their impeccable camouflaged appearance, venomous spines and electric shocks; the stargazer has been called one of "the meanest things in creation". We at CCC however, believe it to be one of the most incredible!



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