

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
November 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 [Ben Jack](#), Field Base Manager and [Marco Galliani](#), Scuba Instructor



For over eight years, Ben has supported a range of research, education, capacity development and community conservation projects. He has also worked with large multinational companies, such as Shell and Mitsubishi Corporation, and their employees to develop organisational sustainability and enhance environmental stewardship. Ben's passion for marine environments has led him to places including the Seychelles, Kenya and Belize; to be involved in coral resilience, mangrove conservation and shark habitat research. He holds a number of relevant qualifications in the field of safety and incident management, including expedition medicine, Offsite Safety Management and Scuba maintenance.

As a teenager, Marco volunteered as a kids canoe teacher, then became a swimming instructor, before graduating as a mechanical engineer, but then took to diving because of his inborn passion for the underwater environment. Marco has dived from the Mediterranean to the Pacific gaining valuable gratification while taking care of animals. Following this passion he quit his job and decided wildlife conservation was his new aim in life. By becoming a Master Scuba Diver Trainer, Marco is keen to highlight the importance of preserving the underwater environment and is still amazed by all marine creatures, however large or tiny they may be.



Stories of the Month

Estela High School Reef Rangers Day

On November 19th CCC held a Reef Rangers activity day for the Estela High School at CCC's Napantao base. Twelve eager students along with two of their teachers arrived shortly after 8.30am. After a quick introductory tour of the CCC base, the students were eased into the day with a game of marine biology Pictionary. Drawing skills were then swapped for hunting skills, as the kids rushed around site trying to collect all the objects in our Reef Rangers scavenger hunt.



Estela students rush to the correct answer during CCC's slap the answer contest - Photo. Jamie Parker

Proceedings then took a more serious turn as CCC Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, guided the students through a series of slideshow lectures encompassing coral lifeforms, fish biology and dangerous marine creatures. These lessons were in preparation for the students first ever snorkel on Napantao reef. Geared up and ready to go; the students made their way into the blue with some of them lucky enough to witness a passing 4 metre long whale shark!

After lunch the students were taught some more about the threats and importance of coral reefs, while also learning about the ways they can contribute to their conservation. With this new found knowledge, the children were introduced to CCC's favourite 'blind fold food-chain challenge' and quick-fire slap the answer contest. Lastly, spirits were high when the students tried their best to protect their 'MPA egg', smothering it in the softest materials they could find. Two intact eggs and a few Reef Ranger graduation photos later, a great day full of activities came to a close.

Marine Film Night, Napantao

On November 18th CCC Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, organised a screening of a marine themed film, at the Barangay Napantao gym. Everyone from the community was invited and offered a seemingly endless supply of popcorn for the night's viewings. The film kicked off at 7.30 with everyone sheltered from the relentless rainfall. However, no amount of rain was able to put a dampener on the evening's proceedings, with everyone buoyant and thoroughly well fed by the end of the evening. The film highlighted the problems with removing wild fish from the environment to be sold within the aquarium industry.



Clownfish have become popular with aquarists the world over – Photo. Jon Cabiles

Education and Community Projects

Coral Cay Conservation Dive Against Debris



Compressor operator, Jose Ydel, scours Napantao reef for unwanted rubbish – Photo. Jon Cabiles

On November 11th Jose Ydel (compressor operator) and Jon Cabiles (Divemaster trainee), donned their SCUBA gear and ventured out into Napantao's MPA. Their mission: Dive Against Debris; to collect as much reef litter, fishing line, discarded nets and unwanted clutter from CCC's house reef as they possibly can.

Marine debris is becoming a dangerous problem across the world's oceans; the planet's growing human population and the lack of efficient waste disposal methods in many regions, has led to an increase in the amount of non-biodegradable waste floating around coastal regions. Non-biodegradable plastics in particular have been shown to seriously harm or

even kill marine and terrestrial creatures including, corals, turtles and sea birds. CCC try regularly to keep the surrounding reefs of Napantao free of litter and raise awareness whenever possible to help prevent its presence in the first place.

Bongawisan Elementary Sea Stars Lessons 2 & 3

On November 11th Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, visited Bongawisan Elementary School to once again enlighten the children about the wonders of coral reef ecosystems, in their final two Sea Stars lessons.

Following on from Jesse's last visit in October, the students were given a more in depth lesson on the functional components of coral reefs, the threats they face, and ways the students can help to sustain its associated resources. Questions were asked throughout, keeping the children on their toes, and were answered in a positive manner. This was a good indication that the topics being taught were not only being understood, but also developing their interests. The next step for the students of Bongawisan will be an invitation to the Napantao reef for one of CCC's Reef Rangers days, where they will get the opportunity to explore one of the best reefs Southern Leyte has to offer.



A packed class of Bongawisan students have all their attentions locked during their second Seastars lesson – Photo. Jesse Tinapay

one of the best reefs Southern Leyte has to offer.

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.

This month CCC started surveying a newly proposed MPA site in Bunga, Padre Burgos. All manner of marine life has been seen within Bunga's healthy looking reef ecosystem; complex hard coral formations, emperor fish congregations and a fifteen armed crown of thorns sea star are among those spotted so far.

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 Bunga proposed MPA in Padre Burgos.



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, Chris Cruz and Victor Villero. Scuba Instructor Chris hails from Manila and has been diving since 1992; Victor, who is from Tacloban, has a Bachelors degree in Geodesic Engineering.

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/>



Coming into this scholarship program I did not have a clue as to what awaited me. About 2 weeks later I realized that the procedures I am learning would be essential to touch base with my country's fisherman folk. For years the Philippines has suffered one of the worst practices in the fishing industry. CCC's approach to surveying gives an eye opener on the grass roots level as to the negative effect of such practices. A program where the kids get involved in a snorkelling program gives them a gift of developing a love of the ocean. When you start them young they will grow old with the knowledge of the impact of what their forefathers have done. Protecting their marine environment will therefore bear fruit for the future generation. Thank you for your time and cooperation. From all the staff at Coral Cay Conservation we wish you the best of luck for the future!

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Chris Cruz



My time at Coral Cay was a combination of science and play; certainly more than okay. I learned a lot of things during my 4-week stay. These memories will forever be etched in my mind: the fun-filled Saturday nights; the nightly nominations for fish-of-the-day; the cities beneath the sea; the fun of learning about different species of fish, corals & invertebrates; the deafening silence on Sundays; the making of broomsticks by the compressor room; and all the everyday conversations in between. In hopes of learning as much as I can, I came to CCC channelling an empty cup for a mind. And CCC did not fail me. Every single thing was attention-grabbing (scuba training, SDP, etc.) I left CCC with an overabundance of new knowledge; opening up new possibilities, sparking new ideas in me, and motivating me to go make a difference in the world. Reefs have so much more to offer; so many secrets to unravel; and I will continue to learn about reefs--and conservation.

-
Victor Villero

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Mandarinfish** (*Synchiropus splendidus*). A fortunate few at CCC were able to meet this flamboyant reef dweller within Napantao's MPA.

This fish's psychedelic appearance has made it a popular purchase for many a salt water aquarist, however, due to its particular feeding habits it is considered difficult to keep. In the wild they are known to feed on small creatures such as polychaete worms, amphipods, small gastropods and fish eggs.

The intricate patterns and vibrant colouration are what gives this shy fish its name; likening its appearance to the robes of an Imperial Chinese mandarin. Large pelvic fins, often mistaken for pectoral fins, allow the mandarinfish to 'walk' along the sea floor, while also possessing a smelly slime skin layer, instead of scales, that protects against disease and deters predation.



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