

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
January 2017

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 Sarah Mynott, Science Officer



A geographer by training, Sarah has a broad range of environmental interests which extend far beyond flags and capital cities. Her love of people and of knowledge saw her become a secondary school geography teacher for five years, of which she loved almost every minute – she could probably have done without the marking! However, her thirst for new challenges lead her to undertake an MSc last year in environmental philosophy and politics, writing a thesis concerning the perception of wild animals in urban space. She has practical side to her as well though, and upon first hearing about Coral Cay Conservation on the radio, she immediately signed up to volunteer with them in Cambodia back in summer 2014. She was (metaphorically) hooked. Being given the opportunity to combine her long-standing passions for coral reefs, environmental action, and education in her role as Science Officer in the Philippines is a dream come true for Sarah. Having previously volunteered for CCC, Sarah has a great deal of respect for this organisation and its mission, and hopes that her enthusiasm and experience will help make the project as effective and as enjoyable as it can be.

Stories of the Month

Napantao Beach Clean

On January 14th, all CCC staff members and volunteers donned rubber gloves and grabbed a rice sack in preparation for a Spring clean of Napantao's long beach. Despite the overcast conditions and the brief spells of light drizzle, everyone did their best to remove as much unwanted debris from Napantao's coastline as they could. All manner of rubbish was collected from plastic bags, bottles, coat-hangers, paint brushes, discarded fishing gear and even the occasional rogue baby diaper. The heavy rain that was unleashed on Southern Leyte over the last 2 weeks was likely the reason for so many rubbish sacks being filled that day; as the rain run-off from the land not only brings with it wood and mud deposits, but also a variety of litter. Having filled 6 full rice bags full of washed-up waste, Napantao's sandy coastline was looking fresher than ever. Keeping the beaches of Southern Leyte clean not only improves aesthetic appeal, but also helps protect marine life from the potential threats associated with plastic pollutants.



CCC members show off their impressive collection of unwanted marine debris – Photo. Jamie Parker

Barangay Napantao's Anniversary Celebration



Thumb-wars were a popular game of choice for many of the Napantao children at the barangay celebration – Photo. Jamie Parker

On Saturday the 28th of January, all CCC staff and volunteers were invited to Napantao's anniversary meal and party; celebrating the formation of Barangay Napantao. Following a day of rain and Purok basketball matches, of which some CCC members attended, everyone in Napantao descended on the Barangay's converted basketball court for spot of food. With everyone tucking in around 8pm, the winners of the dance and singing competitions from the evening prior once again showed off their talents, much to the crowd's delight. The basketball arena was transformed from a community feast to a disco not long after 9pm; the immergence of strobe lights and a pounding bass inspiring the community to swap forks and spoons for dancing shoes. By 1.30am everyone was thoroughly danced out but all headed to bed in high spirits.

Education and Community Projects

Tuno Elementary School Reef Rangers Day

On January 28th, CCC welcomed seven students from Tuno Elementary School to Napantao for the first Reef Rangers day of the year. After arriving in torrid weather conditions, the students were given a guided tour of the base by Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, before jumping into a game of fish themed Pictionary. Led by Yelena Duarte (Sch), the students warmed to the occasion, unleashing some impressive drawings, while also showing identification skills beyond their years. Next on the morning's agenda was a series of coral and fish lessons led by Jamie Parker (PS) and Sarah Mynott (SO). A game of 'slap the answer' followed, adding a slice of intensity to the morning's teachings and bringing out many of the student's competitive streaks. Another set of lectures encompassing food-chains, the threats and importance of coral reefs to Filipino communities, as well as the conservation efforts being used to help preserve their legacy helped prepare the attendees for their final game; the 'blind-fold food-chain challenge'. Organised by Monica Ricafort (Sch) and with help from Yelena Duarte (Sch) and Lisa Sidebotham, all the students succeeded in their mission, completing their food-chains in record time! With exceptional rainfall predicted after lunch, the Tuno students decided to make a dash for it before the heavens opened. Unfortunately a Reef Rangers snorkel session was not possible due the weather conditions, however, that should not detract from the positivity and enthusiasm shown by everyone over the course of a productive morning.



The students delve into some reef fish identification with Sarah Mynott (SO), Monica Ricafort (Sch) and Yelena Duarte (Sch) – Photo. Jamie Parker

Marayag Elementary School Seastars Lesson

On January 26th, CCC's Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, travelled to Marayag Elementary School to give the first of three Seastars lessons to a class of eagerly awaiting students. Jesse kicked off proceedings with a bit of background knowledge regarding coral reefs and their myriad of inhabitants. Explanations for how coral polyps feed and why coral reef ecosystems are so important to the Philippine communities, sparked a multitude of questions from the Marayag crowd. Next week Jesse will be travelling back to Marayag to give the next two lessons; focussing on the threats to the ocean and the conservation efforts that are being made to help preserve it.



A full class at Marayag Elementary listens intently whilst Jesse Tinapay (CLO) introduces them to the wonders of the ocean – Photo. Jesse Tinapay

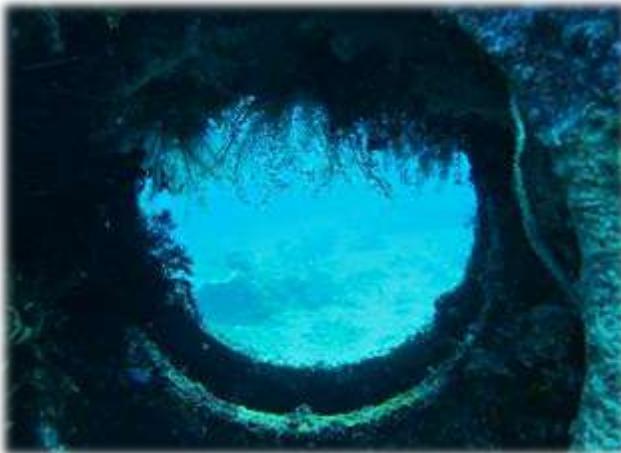
Survey Monthly Update

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 Scientist, Jamie Parker.

Coral Cay Conservation kicked off the New Year by surveying a new site in Barangay Santo Rosario, Padre Burgos. Having just completed the data collection for neighbouring Barangay Bunga, CCC volunteers seek to complete the next investigation during January 2017.

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 provided by CCC volunteers



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 welcomed Andrea Gaurana from Lapu-lapu city, who diverted from her work with RE-Charge in Tacloban, an Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, to learn about the workings of marine conservation here at CCC. Napantao also welcomed Daff Binobo, an employee at the Department of Tourism in Iloilo.

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/>



When I first arrived in Napantao, I had zero background in marine science and diving so I used that in order to be open to new ideas and perspective. Because of that, it became easy for me to absorb all the lessons from SCUBA to SDP and it has broadened my knowledge on conservation and community approaches. Apart from the knowledge and skills, Coral Cay has triggered my interest in doing projects related to marine sciences and conservation. At Napantao, I was also given the opportunity to meet different people with different nationalities and backgrounds from whom I have learned so much. Interestingly, I was not the only one who decided to quit an office job and be part of an advocacy on marine conservation.

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Andrea Gaurana



We arrived on the afternoon of November 9 and after we were able to take some rest and set up our rooms, Claire and Ben immediately introduced us on how things work in the base. Charlie also took on the head start by handing us our SCUBA gear that will be used as soon as we are finished with a few lectures. We were simultaneously introduced to diving and the SDP which in my opinion, was a great job done by the instructors. The pointy and practice surveys were very exciting but it was on the actual surveys that I was really enthralled. It was a great opportunity all in all especially when we were allowed to stay for one more week to do the surveys. If given another chance, I would like to continue my path towards diving and conservation. As parting note, a million thanks to CCC and the staff for helping us and providing us with quality training and experience.

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Daff Binobo

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Spotfin Lionfish** (*Pterois antennata*). These magnificent fish have been gracing Napantao's MPA throughout the month of January; regularly being sighted by CCC staff and volunteers.

Whilst lionfish are an integral cog in many of the Indo-Pacific's reef ecosystems, expertly preying upon small reef fish, invertebrates and molluscs, the Spotfin's larger cousins have developed a destructive reputation in the western Atlantic. After being accidentally released into Floridian waters in the late 80's, lionfish populations have exploded to the point where they are lending to the degradation of many reefs, some as far as the Caribbean. Capable of rapidly producing egg batches, some consisting of as many as 15,000 eggs, these predatory experts has taken advantage of many of the Atlantic's delicate reef ecosystems.

Despite the bad press, we at CCC are always enthralled to encounter these beautiful creatures, and we hope people will remember them for their exquisite form and colourful designs rather than their dangerous capabilities.



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