
Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
March 2017

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

Project Scientist: Felipe Lei
lrpc@coralcay.org



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.

Contents

- Latest News
- Story of the Month
- Educational & Community Projects
- Survey Update
- Marine Scholarship News
- Marine Creature of the Month

Latest News

CCC welcomes Felipe Lei, Project Scientist



Felipe was born in Venezuela, where he spent most of his childhood enjoying the waters of the Caribbean and its marine life. Later, he moved to Spain and started studying a degree in Environmental Science. His passion for marine life made him move to Scotland and start an MSc in Marine Systems and Policies. During Felipe's career, he had the opportunity to work in some stunning places like Barcelona, Menorca and the Maldives, with his academic research focusing on the impact of eco-tourism on whale sharks. After completing his MSc thesis, he was able to travel back to the Maldives again and spend time assisting in a whale shark research program, where he was able to enhance his underwater surveying techniques.



Stories of the Month

Sudmon Elementary School Reef Rangers Day

On March 18th, CCC welcomed 12 students from Sudmon Elementary School to Napantao for their Reef Rangers Day. After a warm welcome, we started the day playing Pictionary with our Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, and our new Project Scientist, Felipe Lei. Once all of them were actively participating, we continued the day with the first lesson about coral lifeforms, fish diversity and food chains. The second lesson, about the importance of Coral Reefs and Threats to Marine Protected Areas, was delivered after a short break where the students could rest and eat. At the end of the lectures time was dedicated for the 'slap the answer' game to test the student's newly acquired knowledge. Finally, it was time for our snorkel session; and all the kids showed a very good attitude, pointing to some corals and successfully identifying their lifeform. Before lunch, and still with our swim suits on, it was time for the kids to try breathing from a Scuba tank for the first time! The day was a very rewarding experience for the students and CCC staff, with the kids showing a lot of positivity and enthusiasm.



Sudmon Students eat Pancakes during the break between lectures – Photo. Felipe Lei

Education and Community Projects

Pinamudlan Elementary School Seastars Lesson

On March 6, our Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, went to Pinamudlan Elementary School to give the first lecture of the Sea Stars Environment Award Scheme (SEAS) to 40 new students from grades 4 to 6. For these 40 young students, it was the first time listening to Jesse's Sea Stars lesson, focusing on marine biology and conservation. They discussed the marine life that we can find in the oceans within



A full class at Pinamutlan Elementary listens to Jesse Tinapay (CLO) SeaStars Lesson – Photo. Jesse Tinapay

the Philippines, as well as, talking about the threats to the oceans and what tools can be used to protect the marine environment. This first lecture qualified the two groups of students as Bronze Star Level Sea Stars. With each consecutive lecture the students will move up a level, eventually obtaining the prestigious Gold Sea Stars award, at which point the students will be invited to the CCC base in Napantao to participate in a Reef Rangers day.

Bongbong Elementary School Seastars Lesson

On the 24th of March our Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay, and Project Scientist, Felipe Lei, travelled to Bongbong Elementary School (San Francisco) for SeaStars Lesson 2 & 3. It was the first time for our new Project Scientist helping with the SeaStars lesson; at the end, he left the school amazed about the energy and enthusiasm showed by the young students. That day, around 30 children from grades 4 to 6 attended the lecture about coral lifeforms, fish families and Marine Protected Areas. They considered and deliberated topics on the different types of corals and their lifeforms, the different fish families present on our reefs, and, the importance of Marine Protected Areas and the benefits they provide to humans. Finally, the students discussed the difference between anthropogenic (human impacts) and natural impacts on nature, and how these can be avoided and remediated by us. After this lecture, some of the students from Bongbong Elementary School achieved the Gold Sea Stars award and will be invited to the CCC base in Napantao to participate in a Reef Rangers day.



Students from Bongbong Elementary pay attention to Jesse Tinapay (CLO) while doing a SeaStars Lesson – Photo. Felipe Lei

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, Felipe Lei.

During this month, Coral Cay Conservation finished survey two proposed MPA sites in Santo Rosario (Padre Burgos) and Cabulihan (Limasawa). Moreover, in San Francisco municipality, a baseline survey was conducted in Santa Paz Sur MPA, and Napantao MPA Re-assessment was started.

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

Photos provided by CCC volunteers during the month of March



Clown Triggerfish



Soft Coral *Sarcophyton* sp.



Moray Eel under Corallimorphs



Goat fish during a night dive

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 marine surveys of the coastline.

This month we welcomed Yelena Duarte from Maasin city, and Lyrin Dominguez from Iloilo; both wanting to follow a career related with Marine Ecosystems and 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/>



"What I admired most was the presence and active participation of the CCC to the community which I believe that it is vital for the goal of the organization like organizing activities such as reef ranger- that gave children the opportunity to learn about marine life. They were also given the chance to snorkel in the channel with the assistance of staff and volunteers. Community outreach wherein staff, volunteers and scholars visited an elementary school to conduct lectures about marine debris and games for the pupils. The MPA present in the area has a big impact in the community because people were aware and informed about it which they also understand the purpose of MPA. Most of all, I met new family and friends in CCC with the volunteers, staff and fellow scholar for they bring out the best in me."

-
Lyrin Mae M. Dominguez



"Studying about the ocean – or at least, a part of it and getting to know the different species and their behaviours and how all this ends up connected to us – it is very inspiring. This experience strengthened my love for the ocean and the environment. All the things that I have learned during my stay has convinced me to pursue a career related to environment conservation and hopefully I will be successful in doing so. Moreover, if CCC continues this work and every single scholar and volunteer gets motivated the same way, then it will make a huge difference for us and the fate of our seas."

-
Yelena Niña C. Duarte

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Whale Shark** (*Rhincodon typus*). They are largest fish and shark in the ocean and inhabit all tropical, subtropical and warm temperate oceans. It is thought that whale sharks can grow more than 15 meters and possibly live up to more than 100 years and, like the majority of the sharks, have a slow growth rate, late sexual maturity, and low reproduction rates, making them vulnerable to extensive exploitation.

Despite the general belief, whale sharks do have teeth, with each jaw housing 3000 to 3500 small teeth pointing backwards. Although not very functional, they can retain the small organisms ingested by the animal. The whale shark is one of the three species of sharks, along with the Basking shark and the Megamouth shark that can feed by filtering water. Their diet consists of, above all, a variety of micro-organisms filtered through its gills, but it can catch larger prey such as squid or small schooling fishes.

Whale sharks are a highly mobile species, and their migratory pathways are still unknown. Sightings occur mostly in coastal feeding areas where the sharks aggregate when productivity is thriving. Peculiarly, the whale sharks sighted within the Philippines are usually small and immature male individuals.



Photo by Felipe Lei

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