

# Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update  
February 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 for local Filipinos, as part of an integrated programme to build 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 Andrea Gaurana, Science Officer

Andrea, or Drei to most people at the Napantao base, first joined CCC as a Filipino scholar in 2016. Finding great interest in marine conservation, she has been working on local scale community-based projects in her hometown that could range from basic education on marine ecology up to developing proposals for marine conservation initiatives. As an avid tropical mountaineer and backpacker, Drei has always found a sense of comfort and connection to the natural environment and has been an advocate of responsible tourism for terrestrial and marine destinations in the Philippines. Her most recent developmental work in Haiyan affected communities in the eastern part of the country has exposed her to a lot of ground work including local community engagement, organisation and facilitation of training, and raising the issue of climate change as a key importance to an archipelagic country like the Philippines.



## Stories of the Month

### Barangay Triana MPA Community Day

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, CCC Project Scientist, Jamie Parker, and Community Liaison Officer, Jesse Tinapay travelled to Barangay Triana, Limasawa to present the results from CCC's survey assessment; in the hope that the findings will help support the establishment of a new MPA. Triana Barangay officials gathered in the Barangay hall to welcome CCC's arrival; before Jamie proceeded with the survey results for Triana's proposed MPA site. The abundance of fish found was one of the highlights of the investigation, while the high rock and hard coral substrate cover throughout the barangay waters was also a promising finding. All those who attended were taken through the key steps for establishing an MPA, and were provided with the potential benefits to be attained from the added protection. The Triana Barangay officials were all encouraged by the results that sparked questions with regards to the MPA's effectiveness and spatial placement. The next step for Triana is to update the community, and especially fisherfolk, with the outcome of this research assessment; setting out a transparent set of rules and coordinates that can be understood by everyone. This will hopefully start the ball rolling with regards to the birth of Limasawa's second official MPA.



Project Scientist, Jamie Parker explains the importance of preserving coral reef ecosystems to the Triana officials – Photo. Jesse Tinapay

### Bongawisan Elementary School Reef Rangers Day



Certificates all round as the newly graduated Reef Rangers celebrate the end of a great day – Photo. Lisa Sidebotham

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, twelve elementary school students were invited from Bongawisan for their first fun filled Reef Rangers experience. The day was packed full of games including an adrenaline filled 'slap the answer', the 'blindfold food-chain game', 'protect your MPA' and fish Pictionary, kept the children on their toes while also developing their knowledge on all things marine. A few short lessons on marine life and coral reef ecosystems set up the Bongawisan students perfectly for a Napantao snorkel session; a first for many of the Reef Ranger trainees. The kids loved the experience so much that another reef swim was organised at the end of the day's proceedings! Introducing the children of Bongawisan to the wonders below the sea's surface will hopefully encourage them to visit the coast more often; helping to inspire interest and conservation for Napantao's impeccable coral reef.

## Education and Community Projects

### Pinamudlan Elementary School Seastars Lesson 1

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Pinamudlan Elementary in San Francisco were next to invite CCC's Jesse Tinapay (CLO) to their school for the first of two seastars lesson instalments. The first lesson attracted the attention of 20 young students, each equipped with an open mind and willingness to learn about their surrounding underwater world. Jesse Tinapay kicked off proceedings with an overview of coral and fish biology before delving deeper into some of CCC's community work. The students, with attentions clearly captured, threw up their hands at every opportunity, answering questions with confidence and enthusiasm. Jesse will be travelling back to Pinamudlan the following week to complete part two of the star lesson series and gauging from the children's interest in the first, the occasion couldn't come round any quicker.



Pinamudlan Elementary School was the stage for CCC's next seastar chapter – Photo. Jesse Tinapay

### Marayag Elementary Marine Debris Awareness Day

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, CCC held a marine debris awareness day for the children of Marayag Elementary School. Over 200 children were in attendance, brimmed full of excitement on a day plagued with rain. The day kicked off with a short presentation by Michelle Tingzon (Sch) and Lyrin Dominguez (Sch) which highlighted the importance of throwing away your litter responsibly and the



Marayag students line up for the garbage infused assault course organised by volunteer, Lisa Sidebotham – Photo. Jani Morton

damage such discarded items can cause when entering the marine environment. A myriad of marine debris infused games followed, including fish bingo, the infamous 'blindfold food-chain challenge', Abbie Dosell's (Vol) 'Evolution' game and a garbage guided assault course hosted by Lisa Sidebotham (Vol) and Jani Morton (SO). An hour of controlled chaos ensued with the students burning off endless reserves of energy while learning about litter picking and recycling. Batteries were recharged as the CCC personnel handed out light refreshments and popcorn, much to the children's delight. This, however, signalled the end of a very wet but productive afternoon; CCC were met with multiple goodbyes as they drove past the school and all of Marayag's energetic students.

## 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 augmented 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 relentless rainfall and high winds sweeping across Sogod bay during the last weeks of January and early February hindered CCC's survey plans for the new MPA proposal across the bay in Sto. Rosario. As a consequence, CCC turned to other alternatives a little bit closer to home in Sta. Paz Sur, conducting surveys within the coastal Barangay's established MPA. CCC would like to implement a regular monitoring assessment scheme for all established MPAs in the Sogod Bay region, to go along side CCC's MPA proposal work. The survey work conducted in Sta. Paz MPA therefore serves as a pilot for this new research direction.

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 from 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 Monica Ricafort from Manila, who has an academic background in European Studies and International Relations. Napantao also welcomed Yelena Niña Duarte, a BA graduate in Speech Communication and a Southern Leyte local, from Soro-Soro, Maasin City.

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 boarded my flight to Tacloban, I remember feeling anxious. I thought: for 4 weeks, I will be away from everything I was familiar with. That feeling, however, quickly dissipated as soon as I caught sight of the waters of the Napantao MPA. It reminded me of why I applied to be a scholar in the first place—to help preserve the waters that have captivated and sustained us for generations. My experience with CCC was amazing. The knowledge and experience I gained helped me understand the delicate relationship we have with our seas and have inspired me to do more work in the field of conservation. Every day was an opportunity to learn and gain insights about the current state of our waters. The Science Room was where we learned about the marine life, but the real classroom was out in the waters of Sogod Bay—learning from the staff, the community, fellow volunteers and first-hand experience. I am forever grateful for the wonderful people I've encountered and the experience and knowledge I've gained.

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Monica Ricafort



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 of 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. 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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Yelena Niña Duarte

## Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Flying Fish** (Exocoetidae) which CCC surveyors were lucky enough to see in full flight on their way to a survey site in late February.

This bizarre fish family, comprised of over 40 species and 8 genera, have mastered the art of flight through thousands of years of evolution. Typically pelagic, flying fish are common prey items to open ocean predators including dolphins, swordfishes, dolphinfish and tuna. Such predatory attention has helped transform the fishes pectoral fins into bird like wings and provided them with a method of escape. Research has found that these soaring fish are capable of flying as far as 400m; such prowess in air prompted the study of these tiny fish in the early 1900s, as potential models for designing aircraft prototypes. Flying fish are caught using various fishing methods including gillnets and dipnets, and are a highly rated food especially in Barbados, 'the land of the flying fish', where it is the national dish.

These incredibly unique pelagic fish are expert survivalists and guaranteed to brighten up any long open ocean voyage with their sea surface soaring.



### 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](http://www.coralcay.org)