

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)



Monthly Project Update

June 2018

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 our new Scuba Instructor (SI), James Patterson!



James grew up very interested in the ocean and had the Indo-Pacific reef guide as a bedtime story from the age of 4. Learning to dive in the Philippines at age 11, he knew immediately what he wanted to spend his life doing, and went professional as soon as he left school. After working and travelling all over Asia, seeing the huge differences small groups of people can make in terms of conservation, he has been desperate to join the cause and help preserve the underwater world for local communities and future generations. James is very passionate about diving and nothing gives him more pleasure than sharing his enthusiasm with others.

Welcome to the CCC team, James!

Stories of the Month

CCC Rescue Diver training

As part of their typical training, CCC volunteers undertake PADI Scuba Diving courses to the Advanced Open water level. This is to ensure that, while undertaking further scientific training and surveys, all divers have the skill required to dive safely while acquiring accurate data for our research programme. However, some volunteers in addition to CCC staff join our project with previously attained diving qualifications. As we have our own PADI Scuba Instructor (SI) on site, CCC offers further dive training for those interested.

This month our SI, James, carried-out his first on-site Rescue Diver training course with our Project Scientist (PS), Anik, and volunteer, Erwann. Training included theory, knowledge reviews and a written test, in addition to in-water skills and scenarios to test the students' rescuing abilities. The team tested their strength, endurance and also trust and patience throughout the 3-day course with everyone getting out of the water safely, with a newly acquired diving certification. Congratulations Anik and Erwann!



Volunteer Erwann and PS Anik practicing their ECP skills on SI James – he's OK!
-Photo by Jasmine Corbett (SO)

Whale Shark spotted in Liloan!

Although the known season for Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*) sighting season is from about October to May, the Gudan survey team was fortunate enough to spot one of these amazing creatures on their way to the survey site! On the boat journey from Barangay Anilao to Gudan, James (SI) spotted something large just under the water's surface. Although his cries for "whale shark" were originally treated as deceitful, the team was pleasantly surprised when the animal's dorsal fin was spotted once again! It was estimated that the shark measured approximately 4m in length, and was spotted on June 21st in the channel under Liloan's Wawa Bridge.



Previous SO, Maisy Fuller, swimming with a Whale Shark sighted in Pintuyan earlier this year.

-Photo by Rafael Manrique (previous SI)

Education and Community Projects

World Oceans Day 2018!

On June 29th, CCC celebrated the 2018 World Oceans Day in partnership with 4Ocean and the Local Government Unit of Liloan. An afternoon event including presentations, a synchronized coastal clean-up, a prize draw and photo-competition brought together over 250 people from the surrounding communities. Groups partaking in the activity included the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) of Liloan, senior students of St. Ignatius Loyola Academy, students undertaking the Environmental Sciences course at Liloan's Technical Vocational Highschool, residents of Liloan city, Barangay Poblacion, Tacloban City and other surrounding communities.

June of each year brings with it the global celebration of our oceans, and the pledge to keep them healthy. This year's theme was selected as "*preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean*". In keeping with the theme, the municipality of Liloan joined in on provincial government efforts to name June as *Environment Month*, and officially launched their *rice from garbage* programme in addition to partaking in CCC's World Oceans Day celebration. The programme acts as an incentive for communities to partake in the making of eco-bricks (building blocks made from reused plastic wastes) to trade in for a given amount of rice.

Participants spread out across the coastline of Liloan to collect trash along beaches, piers and waterways. Barangay officials returned to their respective Barangays to undertake coastal clean-ups in their communities as well. In total, we collected the approximate equivalent of 4 panda bears weight in trash from our coastline. Our collective efforts removed an approximate **1421.5lbs** (or 646kg) of trash from Liloan!

Thank you to all of those who participated. Efforts such as these are a great reminder to the effect each and every one of us can have in our communities for a cleaner Ocean.



Group photo of participants before World Oceans Day synchronized coastal cleanup.

-Photo by Jasmine Corbett (SO).

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. In 2018 CCC will be using a revised approach, Before-After-Control-Impact (or BACI), to assess the effectiveness of CCC's previous efforts in establishing Marine Protected Area's (MPAs). The goal is to understand the barriers associated with MPA establishment, management and success, while providing recommendations for MPA improvement in the Southern Leyte Province. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientist, Anik Levac.

Following the BACI protocol established for this year's research, the CCC team set out at the end of June to commence the biophysical assessment of the previously proposed MPA site in Barangay Gudan. A social perception survey had already been undertaken in May, allowing the team to gain insight into activities and impacts going on in the Barangay's coastal waters.

On June 19th the first transect was accomplished, and by June 22nd the team completed the necessary 4 transects to carry out a comparison with data previously acquired in 2015. By assessing reefs in sites that have not been established as MPAs, where historical data is available, we are able to compare the effects and/or successes of waters designated as MPAs over time. As part of the BACI study, Gudan's coastal waters served as a control site as it does not hold MPA designation at this time. We hope to complete 3 control (non-MPA) and 3 impact (MPA designation for a minimum 2 years) by the end of 2018, in order to adequately study the effect of marine protected areas established in and around Sogod Bay.



CCC undertaking surveys at Barangay Gudan.

-Photo by Anik Levac (PS)



Many target invertebrate species were counted on transects, including Long-spined Sea Urchins (*Diadema* sp.) and Blue Sea Stars (*Linkia Laeviga*).

-Photo by Anik Levac (PS)

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>

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.

The month of June welcomed Blaire Padayhag, of Quezon City, this month's CCC Scholar! Although Blaire is studying for her Master's degree in Marine Science and Fisheries, she wanted to improve her diving skills while improving her knowledge of coral reefs and Marine Protected areas in the Philippines. Both were goals achieved during her time here at CCC. Blaire was able not only to master her buoyancy while diving, but learnt to identify the various species living on our local reefs and their ecology, and even extended her stay with us to undertake extra surveys at one of our study sites in Sogod Bay. Blaire expects her experience will be beneficial for her future career in the field of marine conservation, while her enthusiasm and assistance was much appreciated this month – Thank you Blaire!

“Thank you CCC, from the bottom of my heart, for taking me in not just as a scholar but a part of the family as well during my stay. I have definitely appreciated all the fun dives, the night dive and even more so the lectures included in SDPs. This is definitely one of the most well-spent ‘summer’, taking part in a marine conservation effort! Thank you for the untiring effort in teaching and spreading ocean conservation awareness to the local communities and to the international volunteers. To the future scholars, this is one truly eye-opening experience you’ll never forget!”

-Blaire Padayhag, June Scholar



Blaire Padayhag (Scholar) taking part in our World Oceans Day beach clean-up in Anilao during a surface interval from dive training.

-Photo by Jamine Corbett (SO)

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/>

Marine Creature of the Month!

CCC's *Creature of the Month* goes to the Mandarinfish (*Synchiropus splendidus*) and is dedicated to our new Scuba Instructor, James. In a frantic search for the fish, James finally spotted one while surveying a transect in Barangay Gudan!

The tiny fish only reach a length of about 6cm while being shy and nervous by nature, escaping into the reef at the first sign of a diver's bubbles. The males will however appear at dusk in search of females to mate with. Their big outward set eyes allow them to feed in dim light, on a fairly specific diet including small worms and crustaceans. Unlike typical fish species, Mandarinfish do not have scales, but rather a smelly bitter slime for protection against predators. Their colouration also serves as a type of warning for these predators that they are less palatable!

The common species name is thought to be derived from the fish's bright and strange colouration, apparently resembling that of an Imperial Chinese officer. These typically consist of a blue background with wavy orange lines, though different varieties may have different colours and markings. It is also sometimes referred to as the "Psychedelic fish" for evident reasons.

Although the species has not been assessed by the IUCN redlist, they are vulnerable to the aquarium trade. Due to their bright colours and "cute" body movement, the fish are popular among the pet trade and sought after for the demand. However, they are difficult to keep due to their specific dietary and environmental requirements. They are also vulnerable to destructive fishing methods and habitat destruction.



Although secretive by nature, Mandarinfish are known to come out of hiding at dusk and on cloudy days to spawn.

-Photo courtesy of Pixabay

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