

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)



Monthly Project Update

September 2018

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

Project Scientist: Anik Levac
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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.

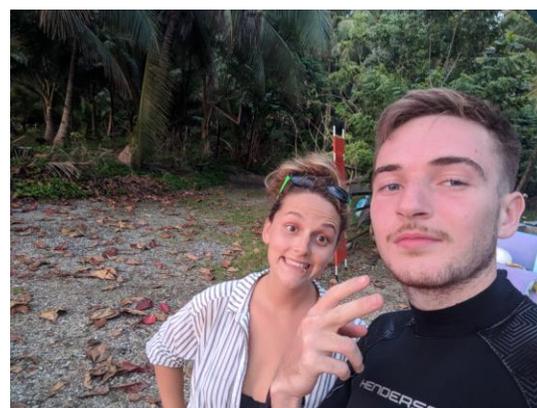
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Latest News

Divemaster training at CCC

As part of their programmes, Project Scientist, Anik, and fellow Angus have been taking their first step in achieving a professional PADI Dive certification; the Divemaster. Together they have been supporting each other's weaknesses and utilising their strengths as motivation to undertake training activities such as the underwater equipment exchange; an activity requiring two divers trading their entire dive kit under water, including mask, fins, Buoyancy Control Device (BCD), and tanks, all while taking turns breathing from the same regulator! The trade-up is also known as the "stress test", requiring both participants to remain calm, while providing their dive buddy with assistance and sharing oxygen when needed. Anik and Angus have been smashing through their training with great success and anticipate completing their certification by October. Keep up the good work!



Anik Levac (PS) and Angus McReynolds (Fellow), Divemaster trainees (DMT's)!

Stories of the Month

CCC Welcomes new Project Scientist (PS) and Science Officer (SO)!

Manon has been interested in the natural environment since she can remember, which led her to complete her BSc. in Ecology and Conservation back in 2014. During her studies, she was lucky enough to travel to the Wakatobi National Park in Indonesia, where she learnt to dive and carried out her undergraduate reef-focused research. This expedition sparked a new-found love for the marine environment (and diving!) and after completing her studies she went back to Indonesia to train and work as a dive master. She eventually returned to the UK where she completed an MSc. in Conservation and Biodiversity and after graduating, interned for a marine conservation project on Perhentian Islands in Malaysia. Here she honed her knowledge of indo-pacific coral reef ecology and completed the PADI instructor development course. Manon feels passionately that conservation projects that work closely with, and involve, the local community (such as CCC) are the most impactful. She has experienced this by immersing herself in new cultures and communities in order to learn from them, to share knowledge and experiences in order to work towards goals that benefit both local communities and the marine environment.



Manon Broadribb, CCC's new Project Scientist (October 2018 – March 2019)

Snorkeling for the first time at five, Jordan was introduced to the wonderful underwater world that now feels like a second home. Seeing colourful, healthy reefs sparked her interest for marine life, and grew into a passion throughout her school years. Jordan pursued this passion in the hope that she could one day contribute to conservation efforts for the ocean and achieved a first class honours in International Wildlife Biology. But Jordan wanted more hands-on experience, so travelled to Thailand and took part in a marine conservation internship in 2017. Seven months later she returned to complete her SSI Dive master training and then assist teaching the very internship she once attended herself. Here, Jordan further expanded her knowledge of coral conservation and began practising coral gardening techniques to gain the nickname 'coral kisser'.



Jordan Williams, CCC's new Science Officer (October 2018 – March 2019)

Welcome to the CCC team, Manon and Jordan!

Education and Community Projects

Community Day in Barangay Bahay

CCC returned to Bahay to conduct a community day, a follow-up to the recent survey efforts on the barangay's reef as an impact site from this year's BACI protocol. This Community Day was unfortunately rescheduled several times, mainly due to weather related concerns. The barangay is a fair distance from our base in Napantao, requiring traversing a long, unpaved road to get there. We were not able to make the journey if the roads were wet, while Habagat decided to bring in rains every time we were organized to make the journey. Luckily, the rains subsided, and we were able to make it safely to Bahay on Saturday September 29th for the event!

Bahay's MPA was established 2 years ago and was revisited in order to assess how/if the reef has changed since the establishment of an MPA. Nearly 50 members of all ages from the community attended the morning event and were very keen on learning about what CCC was all about. Since we had previously visited Bahay, the discussion lead by our Project Scientist focused not only on what an MPA is and how it draws on the community for success, but also on the effects of plastic waste in the environment and how this can be managed.

CCC works to deliver awareness around the globalized issue of plastic waste. One local solution comes in the form of an EcoBrick, for which the building process was discussed. The Bahay community was already involved in the EcoBrick program and brought out several of their own example bricks! Instead of shredding their plastic, they rolled it extremely tightly and stuffed them into bottles to fill them!

It was extremely interesting to see how a community embraced a project and adapted it to make it more efficient for their own needs.



*Anik Levac (PS) describing CCC's project to locals and showing pictures of their reef!
-Photo by Angus McReynolds (CCC Fellow)*



After Anik's presentation we held a quick EcoBricking Workshop! The Barangay Captain of Bahay brought out several of the EcoBricks which members of their community had made on their own using a unique rolling-style to fit plastic into the plastic containers.

-Photo by Angus McReynolds (CCC Fellow)

Electronic and hard copies of the full technical reports are available from our Project Scientist at lrcp@coralcay.org.

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 to assess the effectiveness of CCC's previous efforts in establishing Marine Protected Area's (MPAs) with the goal of understanding the barriers associated to their establishment in the Southern Leyte Province. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientist, Anik Levac.

Established in 1996, Napantao Fish Sanctuary (San Francisco, Southern Leyte) is a prime example of a successful MPA over time. The MPA boasts an astoundingly biodiverse reef, making it a popular dive site amongst local dive resorts. Not only are the coral populations healthy and diverse, but the fish and invertebrate life as well. Biologists, Scuba Instructors and volunteers alike typically surface in awe after taking their first dive in the reserve. Fishermen are often seen spear-fishing outside the MPA, where commercially important species such as Parrotfish (Lapulapu), Grouper (Molmol) and Snapper (K) of considerable size are often seen.

As part of the MPA's long-term monitoring scheme, CCC undertake a bi-annual assessment of the Napantao Reef. This allows for the historical, current and future datasets to be compared. Long-term trends in fish, benthic, and invertebrate abundance and diversity trends can thus be analysed. The Napantao assessment follows the same augmented REEF check methodology as other surveys conducted by CCC, though only 6 transects are assessed: 3 within the MPA, and 3 outside the MPA. Thus, the investigation of differences between protected and non-protected areas in addition to the temporal analysis mentioned.

This month marked the start of the 2nd survey on Napantao Reef in 2018 – a moment staff had been waiting for!



Anik Levac (PS) "I'm OK" on Napantao reef. -Photo by Jasmine Corbett (SO)



The bright and colourful biodiversity in Napantao Fish Sanctuary. -Photo 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.

Although we did not have a Filipino scholar in the month of September, Angus McReynolds from the United States was able to join CCC by qualifying for a fellowship through his college!

"This June I graduated with a BSc in Chemistry from Union College, New York. Not quite ready to pursue a degree in higher education, a necessary step in starting a career in the field, I proceeded to search for other ways to spend my first years of post-graduate life. It was in this search that I discovered a Union College fellowship called the Minerva Fellows Program. Every year my college selects eight graduating seniors who are chosen to travel to different parts of the globe, to work in developing countries while paired up with a social entrepreneurial organization for nine months.

After the nine-month placement, Minerva Fellows return to campus for a month and offer formal presentations, interact with students, speak to classes and give presentations to the community.

Most students are paired with an organization that has an established relationship with the college, while one student is chosen for what is called the "Wildcard" slot. Every year, the Wildcard works for a new project with a new organization which the student has researched themselves. A lengthy proposal is submitted to the Minerva Fellows Program to have that project considered for the fellowship. I've always had an interest in Outdoor Leadership and Education as well as an understanding of the global threats to reef communities and the consequences our planet faces if reefs are not protected. CCC definitely appeared to be the most legitimate and established project in the area, and after a few emails and a Skype call to explain who I was, CCC agreed to accept me. They created a special training program schedule which included additional training including PADI Rescue and Divemaster courses, in addition to being able to shadow members of staff in varying positions to gain a real grasp of the overall goings-on at the project. I was accepted for the fellowship, now here I am for the next 7 months (as I've already completed my first two)!



Angus poses for the underwater camera after a practice survey dive.

-Photo by Jasmine 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 Flying Gurnard (*Dactylopterus volitans*). This is the most common species of gurnard and is found on both sides of the Atlantic. In the Philippines, however, exists the Oriental flying gurnard (*Dactyloptena orientalis*). The name "gurnard" comes from the French word for grunt, which is appropriate as the fish are known to emit growling sounds through their swim bladder! Unfortunately, despite some reports, flying gurnards are actually incapable of flight.



Oriental Flying Gurnard - Photo by Jens Peterson

The purpose of their extravagantly enlarged pectoral fins seems largely to be as a defence mechanism. When disturbed they extend the fins, which are typically held against the body, outwards in a fan-like display. The fins are edged with a bright blue colour and multiple spikes that would typically indicate that the fish had toxic characteristics (they are even distant cousins of the deadly scorpion fish), but fortunately there's no venom present within the flying gurnard. Despite these extraordinary fins, the flying gurnard continues to amaze through their unusual way of moving about and feeding. Rather than swimming they prefer to use a set of adapted pelvic fins to "walk" along the seabed in search of food. Their typical prey consists of crabs, shrimp, and other small crustaceans. They typically find prey by pushing aside seaweed and pebbles and washing away sand in an attempt to disturb and uncover any potential food which the hungry fish quickly snaps up! When the flying gurnard's oversized pectorals are folded neatly away and stowed, the fish are capable of swimming in a more normal fashion.

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