

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update

November 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

Merry Christmas from all of us at Coral Cay!

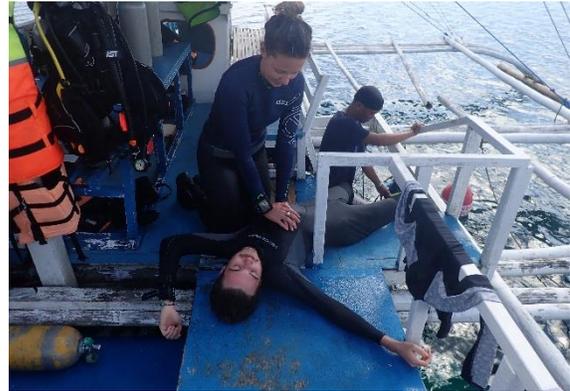
This will be our last monthly update until the New Year, so we want to take this opportunity to wish all our project partners a very merry Christmas and all the best going into the New Year! We couldn't achieve our goals without your help and support, and we want to say thank you for helping us make 2018 a very successful year. Here's to our continuing cooperation into the future, we will see you after the festive period!



Coral Cay staff at our 2018 Christmas party. L-R: Jordan (SO), Nan Pedang (cook), Manon (PS), Gareth (FBM), Dodong (compressor operator) and Ricky (boat coxswain).

Congrats to our Newest Rescue Diver

Over the past few days one of our volunteers, Jemima, completed her rescue training. She was on call for all kinds of simulated emergencies, from towing tired divers to performing in-water rescue breaths. She passed all the stages with flying colours, and is now fully certified! We all feel a lot safer having one extra trained rescue diver on base, so well done Jemima! Also, big thank you to dive master Angus, who helped out on the course by playing the victim and being saved by Jemima many times over the course of the training. They made a great team!



Jemima performs CPR on Angus after her search and recovery exercise. Photo: Jordan Williams (SO).

Story of the Month

Team Trip to Hindangan Falls

Instead of spending our usual lazy Sunday resting after a busy week of hard work, we decided to get a van up to Hindangan falls and have some fun jumping into pools and slipping down the slides there. After tiring ourselves out splashing around, we headed back to base.

On route home we stopped off on Lilioan Bridge to check out the view, and see the whirlpools the town is named after. We also took a little walk down onto the beach underneath the bridge and had a look to see what creatures we could find in the little rock pools. We all had a lovely day, and it was great for scholar Claudia and volunteer Jemima to get to see some other parts of Southern Leyte after their busy schedule during the skills development program (which they both successfully completed!).



Volunteer Jemima and Project Scientist Manon hanging out in one of the pools built into the waterfall at Hindangan Falls. Photo: Jordan Williams (SO).

Survey Monthly Update

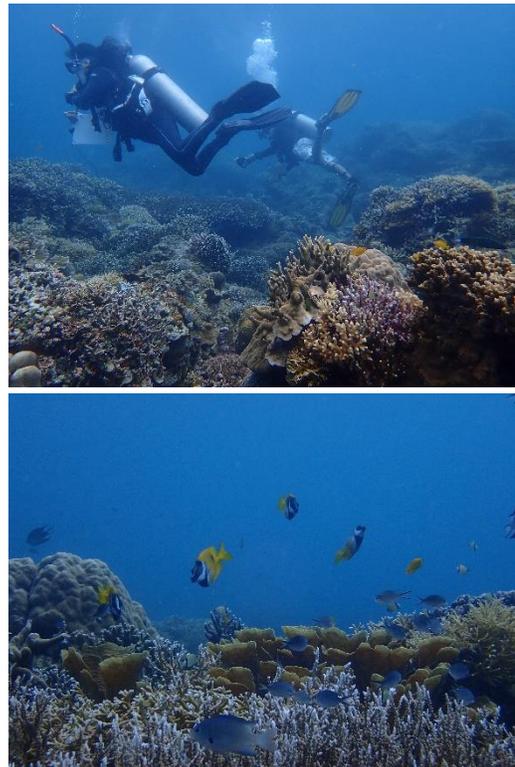
Survey background: Since January 2013, survey efforts have been focused on assessing potential and existing Marine Protected Areas in Sogod Bay to provide appropriate management recommendations. To do this CCC uses an expanded version of the Reef Check protocol, which has been customised to perfectly 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 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, Manon Broadribb at lrcp@coralcay.org.

Nueva Estrella Norte Surveying Continues

This month, we are finishing off surveying the MPA at Nueva Estrella Norte, as part of our 2018 approach in which we aim to assess the efficacy of MPAs around Sogod Bay which have been in place for over two years. Nueva Estrella Norte is our last survey site for the year as part of this approach, so we are making the most of our surveys which, for most people, is their favourite part of their time on site.

Approved in 2016, Nueva Estrella Norte is a reasonably new MPA, and we can see why it was chosen to be protected. We carried out a rapid visual assessment (RVA) whilst completing our transect surveys, during which we get a general idea of the survey area by going on a roving dive of the site and taking notes and photos of the different species and substrate types we can see. The live substrate was very diverse, with many different types of hard and soft corals apparent. A few of our target fish and invertebrate species were also spotted during this time, but we cannot say for certain the state of the reef until we finish our biophysical assessments and carry out statistical analysis.

At the time of writing this, we have three transects left to complete, and so far everything is going well and to time. Thank you to our current staff, volunteers and scholars for helping us complete our final surveys of 2018!



Top: Volunteer Claudia and CCC dive master Dodong carrying out the RVA. Bottom: Example of the diverse substrate and different fish species seen during the RVA. Photo: Jordan Williams (SO).

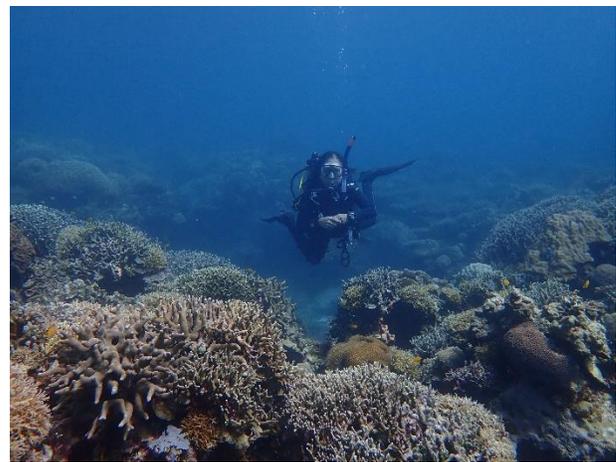
Scientific reports from all of CCC's sites around the world are available on our website at <http://www.coralcay.org/science-research/scientific-reports>

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 submarine surveys of the coastline.

New Scholar Claudia Completes SDP

This month we welcomed our new scholar, Claudia Artazo. Claudia is an experienced diver, with hundreds of logged dives done all over the Philippines, so got straight into our skills development program (SDP) when she arrived. She has been extremely committed, studying hard every evening and morning and really giving it all she's got! She completed SDP right on time to begin surveying with the rest of the team, and completed her first survey yesterday which she said she really enjoyed! Claudia will carry on surveying with us until the time comes for her to leave next week. Thank you, Claudia, for all your hard work and perseverance, and for helping us carry out our final surveys of 2018. We wish you all the best in the future!



Claudia stops for a quick photo whilst helping carry out a rapid visual assessment of our newest survey site at Nueva Estrella Norte. Photo: Jordan Williams (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

This month, CCC's creature of the month goes to the nudibranch! These little guys are found all over the world's oceans, but are most abundant in shallow, tropical waters. There are nearly 3,000 known species of nudibranchs and new species are being identified almost daily. Their scientific name, *Nudibranchia*, means naked gills, and describes the feathery gills and horns that most wear on their backs as well as the fact that they shed their shells in the larval stage.

The nudibranch resembles the creations of talented painters as an exercise of imagination. They come mostly in bright colours, decorated with patterns and profusions of undulating flaps, sensory organs and waving forests of "fingers" making it difficult to determine which end is which. Delicate, seemingly unprotected, but beautiful to look upon, they are the underwater equivalent of a

butterfly. Their bright colours can be used to warn predators that they are noxious or even toxic – or to hide: a bright red nudibranch "vanishes" when it stations itself on a bright-red sponge. Some nudibranchs can secrete a toxin so powerful that a single nudibranch placed in a bucket with fishes or crabs will kill them in about an hour!

They carry on their heads a pair of sensory organs called rhinophores, a pair of highly sensitive tentacles used to identify prey. Nearly all species of nudibranchs are carnivorous and slowly move along the substrate feasting on sponges, anemones, corals, barnacles, and even other nudibranchs. They derive their colouring from the food they eat, which helps them camouflage, and some can even retain the foul-tasting poisons of their prey and secrete them as a defence against predators. Overall pretty cool little creatures!



Photos of two beautiful nudibranchs taken by volunteer Chris Gamlin during a rapid visual assessment of the survey site at Barangay Catig.

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