

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update

March 2019

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

Goodbye to Manon, previous Project Scientist

Manon joined the project in September 2018 and spent six months in Napantao. During her time here, Manon did an incredible job with writing our scientific reports, scheduling Marine Protected Area surveys and maintaining our good relationships with local stakeholders. She was a well-loved member of the team here and will be greatly missed. We would like to wish her all the luck in her PhD search and hope our paths cross again someday.



Manon on one of her many dives here at Napantao Fish Sanctuary. Photo taken by Jordan Williams.

Goodbye to Jordan, previous Science Officer

Jordan also came to Napantao in September and her passion came shining through whilst she trained all our volunteers and scholars in our Science Development Programme. Her clear interest in conservation inspired many that came through Coral Cay Conservation and her teaching style will be missed, especially the soft coral dance moves.

We wish Jordan all the best in her future endeavours and hope she continues the great work in marine conservation.



Picture above: Jordan looking for unusual creatures of the reef.



Picture to the left: Both Manon (PS) and Jordan (SO) enjoying their last sunset together at Napantao CCC base.

Story of the Month



Photo taken by Stuart Ross (Science Officer). All the children getting ready for the games

A Day at Limasawa, Children's Sport for Peace!

The 29th March was a very special day! CCC were invited to Limasawa to partake in the island's fun day of water sports. The event was hosted by the regional government in an attempt to get the local children interested in water sports. The children from four different barangays came together to swim, dance, and compete in beach games.

CCC were there to talk about the importance of marine conservation. We set up our tent and table with some Eco-bricks and conservation posters for presenting to the children.

The children, all from different barangays, would rotate beach games and then whenever any were feeling a bit hot and worn out from the sun would come over to our tent for a bit of more relaxed, educational fun. There were groups of up to 20 children joining our activities at a time, so we were able to alternate between showing them how to Eco-Brick to recycling their used plastics. After that our Project Scientist, Charlie, would give a talk on some of the marine life you could find in the Oceans and why it is important to protect them. Once the event was over everyone had some afternoon lunch on the boat before going on a snorkel themselves.



Photo taken by Stuart Ross (Science Officer). The children crowding around for Eco-Bricking fun!



Photo taken by Stuart Ross (Science Officer). From left to right: Angus McReynolds (vol.), Leonie Messmer (vol.) Rio Cahambing, Charlie Heney (PS), Maria Villegas (scholar), Katie Dyson (vol.) Peter Jones (FBM), Stuart Ross (SO) and Edmond Keall (vol.) We were lucky enough to be given t-shirts to remember the day!

Educational and Community Projects

Community day presentation in Anislagon

This month we had our community day at Anislagon. The day began with a walk over to the barangay hall along a beautiful ocean side path with palm trees on either side. Once we reached the hall we were greeted by a group of local children ready to learn about the underwater world.

Our project Scientist, Charlie, gave a talk to the community children on marine life, Anislagon's reef, and the hazards of plastic. At the end there was a fun quiz on plastics where candies were handed out!

By then the children were ready to start Eco-Bricking. We set up two tables and split into two teams. The teams raced to finish their Eco-Brick first, it was a close race and both teams finished in under 30 minutes!

Once the competition was over, we all sang Justin Biebers "baby" while sitting on the wall. We all packed up and started the walk back to the van. The children decided to tag along for the whole journey, singing songs and chasing each other around. We were a parade of proud Eco-Brickers walking through the Barangay.



Photo taken by Stuart Ross (Science Officer). Charlie (PS) giving a presentation on Anislagon waters and marine plastics.



Photo taken by Stuart Ross (Science Officer). Left: Stuart Ross (SO) helping the children Eco-Brick. Right: group photo of all of us at CCC and the children of Anislagon.

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.

Surveying at Cagbungalon!

From 2018, we have introduced a new survey methodology to assess the effectiveness of implemented MPAs. To do this, we have adopted a BACI (Before-After-Control-Impact) approach. We have 6 sites, 3 of which have an established MPA (Impact Sites) and 3 of which do not have an MPA but meet the criteria for inclusion (control sites). By re-visiting these sites and surveying their reefs, we can compare the data for the site with protection and those without to understand the benefits of MPA implementation in Sogod Bay.

Cagbungalon, San Francisco is the second survey site under this design and is considered a control site (no MPA was created, despite recommendations in 2016). We have GPS co-ordinates of the surveyed transects visited by CCC in 2016, so we have begun re-visiting those co-ordinates to comparatively re-sample the area.

Currently, we have surveyed two 6m transects and two 12m transects, with various fish, substrates and invertebrate species identified. From these initial dives, it is expected that the barangay still fishes these waters due to a lack of larger commercially important species. This is however, only speculation at this stage and further assessment will be done through the report. There are also observations of trash, both fishing and general. Although, it is difficult to conclude the origin of marine trash, Cagbungalon may be able to assist in reducing the occurrence through increase waste management and potential beach clean-ups. We expect to finish this site in the first week of April and the data can be saved for comparison once all surveying at the BACI sites are complete.

This is an exciting time for CCC as the results from the BACI surveys provide a unique opportunity to utilise baseline data that aims to provide local stakeholders with recommendations for MPA establishment, to provide resource managers critical data on the performance of their MPAs.

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.

This month we welcomed Dianna Villaflor, who has previous experience working with NGOs in Manila. Dianne already had her PADI Open Water when she joined us, so got stuck straight into her Advanced Open Water training and our skills development programme! She came to CCC to improve her knowledge on marine conservation and the reality of working with an NGO, and she really excelled. Her natural passion for conservation and aspirations to become more involved in the future meant she really excelled whilst here! We really hope she gained a lot from her experience and wish her the best of luck in all her future studies and endeavours.

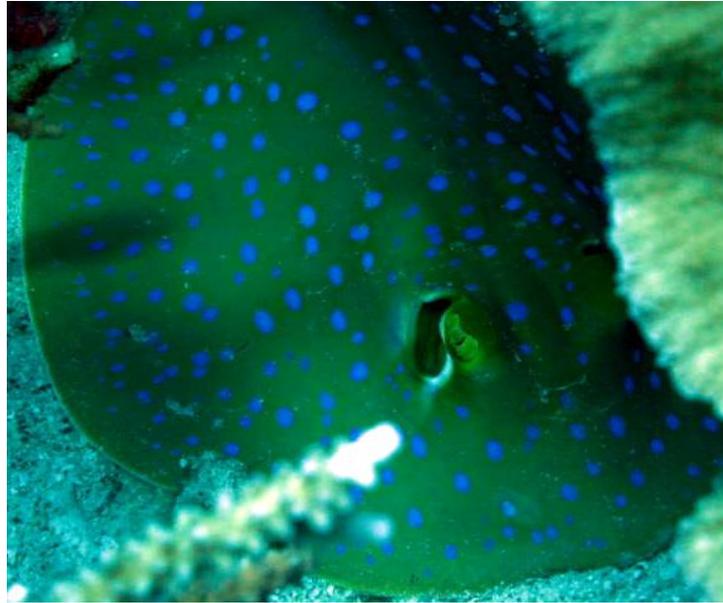


Dianne helping with the community day in Anislagon with great visayan translation and getting involved with EcoBricks.

"This experience has been amazing especially in understanding the science and work behind marine conservation. It definitely opened my eyes in the work that everyone is already doing, and the work that still needs to be done in addressing various environmental issues. From the theory to the execution, I learned a great deal about the science behind marine conservation. It was great to get a full understanding of coral reef assessment and the role that local communities play in improving biodiversity. This is definitely an experience that can be useful for Filipinos who want to understand an important aspect of our country, our biodiversity, and how in addressing this environmental issue, we can go about creating sustainable impact. A huge thanks to the CCC, the staff, and the volunteers for their patience and encouragement. They have truly made this a wonderful and science-filled experience!"

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 Blue-Spotted Ribbontail Ray (*Taeniura lymma*). This ray is found from Australia to the North of the Philippines. It is a reef dweller and is often found on sandy bottoms, hidden under ledges or in reef holes during the day. It hunts with the rising tide, amongst other rays, on sandy flats at night, where it roots for small invertebrates and fish. This month we were lucky enough to spot one whilst surveying Cagbungalon.

These rays, not to be confused with the similarly named Blue-Spotted Stingray, have round oval bodies covered with vibrant blue spots and a thick ribbon-like tail approximately 1.5 times the body width. They can grow up to 80cm long and 5kg in weight and are naturally preyed upon across the world by Hammerhead sharks, Bottlenose dolphins and large fishes. When threatened, they are known to flee at high speed in a zig-zag pattern to confuse predators.

Its striking appearance and relatively small size has, unfortunately, made it the most targeted ray in the home aquarium trade where even the healthiest of individuals are known to inexplicably perish. This along with extensive fishing pressure and habitat degradation has resulted in this species being listed as a 'Near Threatened' by the IUCN.

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