Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP)

Monthly Project Update

June 2014

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

Project Scientist: Charlie Wiseman (lrcp@coralcay.org)

SLRCP Project Aim

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP) is a collaborative project to protect the coral reefs of Sogod Bay. The programme provides 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 and the Philippine Reef & Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCFI). Coral Cay Conservation provides the resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests.

Latest News

CCC takes part in the 54th Southern Leyte Founding Anniversary Parade

On the 30th June 2014, CCC staff travelled up to Maasin to be part of the 54th Southern Leyte Founding Anniversary Parade on the 1st July. We were generously provided with overnight accommodation at the Provincial Girl Scout Building so that we could attend the parade at 6am. The day started with the sounds of drums and xylophones emanating from crowds of brightly dressed Filipinos. CCC were given their own position in the parade between an elaborate “under the sea” float and members of the Department of Education. Everyone greatly enjoyed walking around Maasin and sharing in the excitement and pride of all the locals. The Provincial government were very happy that we could attend and raise awareness of Marine Protected Areas (MPA’s) with our mobile puppet show. A great time was had by all!

CCC staff represent an MPA at the 54th Southern Leyte Anniversary Parade in Maasin

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Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project
Philippines, June 2014

Performers dancing in the 54th Southern Leyte Anniversary Parade in Maasin (left). One of the floats depicting a whale shark and an “under the sea” scene (right)

Story of the Month

CCC welcomes new staff

CCC is thrilled to introduce our new Project Scientist Charlie Wiseman, our new Science Officers Amy Gosney and Alan Kavanagh and our new SCUBA Instructor Amy Cartwright. Charlie Wiseman studied her BSc in Marine Zoology and her MSc in Tropical Coastal Management at Newcastle University in the UK. Her background involves monitoring sea turtle populations in Malaysia and the Caribbean. She has extensive coral reef surveying experience throughout the Caribbean and has worked closely alongside local fishers, government organisations and dive industry members to raise awareness of marine conservation. She is a passionate marine scientist that cares greatly about the environment and people around her.

Amy Gosney studied her BSc in Environmental Science at Leeds University in the UK. Her passion for marine biology led her to volunteer with the CCC Philippines expedition in 2012, during which she learnt to dive and conduct scientific research. After completing her dissertation investigating the long-term effects of MPA’s, Amy travelled to the Caribbean to conduct further research and become a PADI Dive Master. Amy is looking forward to combining her love of diving and the marine environment with her interest in teaching.

Alan Kavanagh was interested in marine biology from an early age. He first experienced the world of marine conservation with the CCC Philippines expedition in 2008. Alan studied his BSc in Marine Biology at Bangor University
in Wales and his MSc in Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in Edinburgh, Scotland. He has experience working as a Marine Education Ranger in Devon, UK and a Green Fins Environmental Impacts Assessor on behalf of The Reef-World Foundation in the Philippines. He is excited to return to CCC as a staff member and help volunteers discover both the weird and the wonderful aspects of the marine world. Amy Cartwright has been diving for the past 10 years and her love of travelling has seen her working as a PADI Dive Master and Instructor all over the World. Her fascination with the marine environment led her to pursue a degree in Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology at Plymouth University in the UK where she has become certified as a commercial diver. She also holds qualifications in boat handling, first aid and sea survival and will be entering her final year of university when she returns home. Amy is looking forward to being part of a conservation team and getting involved with active research whilst sharing her passion for diving and the marine environment with others.

**Education and Community Projects**

**Coral Cay presents the results of their MPA assessment in Tabugon to the local Barangay Council**

On the 25th June CCC’s two Project Scientists Laura Foley and Charlie Wiseman visited Tabugon barangay to speak with their council about the status of the coral reef inside their MPA.

Results of CCC’s ecological surveys showed that the MPA was situated over a highly sandy area with little hard coral cover. Unfortunately this means that the MPA is unable to reach its full potential. Hard corals are an important habitat for fish, without them fish have nowhere to live, grow or reproduce. The existing MPA is, therefore, not protecting an area of high fish abundance or diversity and as a result will not provide adjacent fisheries with a source of fish. Surveys outside of the MPA at 12m, however, revealed much higher coral cover. Placing an MPA in this area would provide fish with a suitable habitat in which to thrive and “spillover” into the surrounding waters and support local fisheries.

The Tabugon Council were very appreciative of CCC’s hard work and were greatly concerned that their MPA was not situated in the best possible location. They were excited about our recommendations to move the existing MPA to cover a more diverse, coral covered habitat. Passionate discussions even led to the idea to establish an MPA Committee formed of key community members that would manage the MPA from the ground up.

Community support is vital to the survival of an MPA; therefore CCC plans to work closely with the barangay council and the Municipal Agricultural Office (MAO) to help the local people effectively manage fishing in their barangay waters. CCC will provide community education alongside the MAO and the barangay council about the value to local fish stocks of a well-maintained MPA. CCC is very excited about relocating the MPA to a more suitable area and working closely with the community because it will help local fishers to see the benefits of MPA’s first hand and understand their importance to sustaining livelihoods.
Survey Update

Survey background: Since January 2013, survey efforts have been focused on assessing Marine Protected Areas in Sogod Bay, in order to provide management recommendations. To do this we use an expanded version of the Reef Check survey protocol, which has been customised by CCC 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, Charlie Wiseman.

2014 has been a busy and productive year for Coral Cay so far! We have recently completed our ecological assessment of the proposed marine reserve site in the Barangay Molopolo, in Liloan and are now beginning the data analysis and write-up. We are also in the process of finalising the write-up for another Liloan MPA in the Barangay Cagbungan. Our keen volunteers and scholars excelled through their science training and greatly enjoyed the opportunity to join the survey team and help finish the Molopolo assessment.

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 the student in SCUBA diving to the level of PADI Advanced Open Water. They 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 are proud to introduce our two scholars Bryan Madera and Trisha Cruz. Bryan is currently studying his Masters in Environment and Natural Resources Management with a focus on Coastal Resources Management at the University of the Philippines Open University. He chose to work with Coral Cay Conservation to develop his scientific survey skills and to learn how NGO’s contribute to coastal management. Trisha is an architecture student at the University of the Philippines. She took part in the scholarship programme because she is pursuing a career in the design of conservation building complexes such as the existing CCC site. She learnt a lot of new scientific skills whilst on site and hugely enjoyed...
learning about conservation and sustainable reef management. They were a joy to have on the programme and we cannot wait to hear where their new training takes them.

Scholar Bryan Madera (3rd from right) and the CCC International Staff

It has not only made the path towards what I want to do for the Architectural Undergraduate Dissertation at the University of the Philippines so much clearer (as it is my plan to design a building complex or facility similar to Coral Cay), but also made me want to pursue a new path towards the cause of conservation and the protection and sustaining of the reefs and enabling others to do the same. I hope nothing but the best for Coral Cay and that the work everyone has been putting in continues to pay off.

Trisha, CCC Scholar

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/
We are excited to announce the bigfin reef squid *Sepioteuthis lessoniana* as our creature of the month! It is named *Sepioteuthis*, which literally translates to “cuttlefish squid” in Greek because of its large oval fin that extends out around its body, giving it the appearance of a cuttlefish. They are small squid that average 3.8cm to 33cm in length and have a short life span of only 315 days. Divers and snorkelers know them for their mesmerising ability to change their skin colour at will. The skin of a squid’s entire body is covered in tiny sections of cells called chromatophores. These chromatophores are heavily pigmented and contain reflective plates that a squid can move to change the amount of light they reflect. This change in reflected light changes the colour of the squid’s skin. During mating displays male squid are able to change the colour of one side of their body to attract females whilst keeping the opposite side of their body a neutral colour so that other males do not suspect it of “flirting”.

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).