Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP)

Monthly Project Update

May 2015

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

Project Scientist: Shannon Cameron (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, 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 and the Philippine Reef & Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCFI). CCC provides the resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests.

Latest News

Say “Hello” to our new boat nicknamed - ‘The Nudi Hunter’

After several months of diving and surveying our house reef in Napantao we are thrilled to have our new research boat up and running and be able to get out and advance marine conservation in other areas of Sogod Bay. Nicknamed after a particular favourite marine creature of ours, the nudibranch, the Nudi Hunter has successfully completed trips to Barangays: Gudan and Himayangan, and will soon be making trips to further destinations around Sogod Bay. We are very excited to explore all of the new locations that the Nudi Hunter can take us to and discover their biodiversity!

Nudi Hunter was named after a firm favourite here at CCC – the nudibranch. These two species were photographed in Sogod Bay and we hope our aptly named boat will help us find many, many more!
Story of the Month

CCC Welcomes a New Project Scientist

After six very successful months here in Southern Leyte we say goodbye to our Project Scientist, Alix Green. Alix did some fantastic work during her time here and we wish her the best of luck for the future and huge congratulations for securing a PhD position in the UK.

Our new Project Scientist, Shannon Cameron, has arrived on site from Scotland and is ready to pick up where Alix left off. Shannon studied an undergraduate degree in Zoology with the University of Glasgow during which she was lucky enough to travel to Indonesia to carry out research for her dissertation. It was here in 2011 that she learned to dive and discovered a passion for the marine environment. Since this time she has undertaken research work on marine systems in the UK, Ecuador, Maldives and Malaysia and progressed to PADI Rescue Diver. Shannon recently graduated with a Masters in Marine Science from Heriot-Watt University during which she carried out extensive research on the importance of natural resources to the livelihoods of rural communities.

This is Shannon’s first visit to the Philippines and she looks forward to embracing Filipino customs and culture; she has already begun to learn some basic Visayan from our scholars and local staff. She has also started meeting with some of our local stakeholders and looks forward to getting to know our friends in the Provincial and Municipal Governments and their associated Barangays.

Education and Community Projects

CCC Attends the Liloan Monthly Coastal Clean-Up

After arriving in Southern Leyte our new Project Scientist, Shannon was invited to help out with the monthly coastal clean-up in Liloan to which she happily obliged.

The Liloan boulevard is a hot-spot for trash build up from the rest of Sogod Bay and highlights the importance of effective waste management in its local Barangays. Shannon was impressed to see such a great turn out from staff of the Municipal Government of Liloan and local Police service and was more than happy to get her hands dirty and help out with this essential event!

Left: Local volunteers from the Municipal Government of Liloan had high spirits during their recent Coastal Clean-Up event!
Survey 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. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientist, Shannon Cameron.

After many months without a boat our team are thrilled to be able to begin surveying farther afield in Sogod Bay. So far we have completed one survey in Gudan and have many exciting projects lined up for the coming weeks! The waters of Barangay Gudan are most famous for the well-known and very popular dive site “Olly’s Wall” which, of course, we would like to preserve for future generations to experience and enjoy as we do now.

As well as Olly’s wall, other areas of Gudan offered many surprises including rare species of frogfish and cuttlefish (see our marine creature of the month!) telling us that the waters of this particular Barangay have a lot of potential and make a very promising case for the implementation of a future Marine Protected Area. Our Project Scientist, Shannon will be working with the data collected from Gudan over the coming weeks to produce a detailed report on our findings.

A small selection of the phenomenal invertebrate biodiversity found in the waters of Barangay Gudan

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/
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Philippines, May 2015

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 CCC welcomed Jason Tuang-tuang on site as part of our scholarship programme. Jason is from Bontoc, Southern Leyte and is currently a sophomore student studying a BSc in Marine Biology at the Southern Leyte State University (SLSU) Bontoc campus. Jason learned of our scholarship scheme when a previous Project Scientist visited SLSU to present to the biology department about our conservation work here in Sogod Bay. We look forward to maintaining a strong relationship with SLSU in the future.

After graduating from his Bachelor’s degree Jason plans to spend one or two years teaching while applying the skills and knowledge he has gained to the marine environment, before undertaking a Masters in the field of Marine Biology & Conservation. His ambition is to continue research in his beloved Sogod Bay, where he has been amazed by the biodiversity he has discovered, and help to preserve it for future generations. Ultimately, Jason’s goal is to become a teacher so that he can pass on everything he has learned about this fascinating ecosystem. We have loved having Jason here on site; we wish him the best of luck for the future and hope he will continue to enjoy exploring the wonders of life on the reefs of Sogod Bay and beyond.

“Our life is so fantastic – full of joys and fun. Everything that I’ve learned here is essential to protecting the marine ecosystem. Now that I am a certified Advanced Open Water Diver, I’ll be able to realise my dream to become a marine eco-saver and take care of our widely diverse Sogod Bay. Thank you so much CCC for giving me this opportunity and providing everything I need. I’m so happy to finally meet the new version of me – a certified diver!”

- Jason G Tuang-Tuang

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/
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Marine Creature of the Month!

CCC’s creature of the month for May is the Flamboyant Cuttlefish (Metasepia pfefferi). M. pfefferi is a species of cuttlefish found in tropical Indo-Pacific waters including numerous islands in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. At the moment we know very little of this animal which is listed as “data deficient” on the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Redlist.

Its intriguing name comes from the ‘flamboyant’ show of changing colours and patterns they display to ward off predators; while the colourful flesh of this cephalopod is vibrant and beautiful to look at it contains a unique and potent poison which makes it unsuitable for consumption. M. pfefferi is also the only species of cuttlefish known to use their tentacles to ‘walk’ across the sea floor.

Our team were lucky enough to spot this fascinating creature whilst conducting an MPA survey in the waters of Barangay Gudan, in the municipality of Liloan. This rare sighting suggests that Gudan may have more to offer than we know!

Photo Credit: Jesse T

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.