Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project

Shannon Cameron  July 2015
The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCPP) is a collaborative project to protect the coral reefs of Sogod Bay. The course 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.
CCC welcomes a new Education Officer

CCC is very excited to welcome another new staff member this month – Education Officer Maricris Calilung! Nicknamed Maki, she is the first Filipino to work solely as an Education Officer with us here at Coral Cay Conservation. Her mother tongue is Tagalog which will serve as a great asset to our work here in the Philippines, particularly in the education of local children.

Maki graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Communication Arts at De La Salle University, a premier university here in the Philippines, and has many years of experience working in the media industry. She has recently taken a break from her work with Philippine Film Productions, Inc. to follow her passion for teaching and take on the role of educating local elementary and high school students in conservation science. During her time here, Maki plans to deliver the CCC Seastars Environmental Award Scheme to as many schools as she can reach in Southern Leyte, creating an eco-club in each school to ensure that the conservation education continues after she has left. Maki has already proven to be a valuable asset to Coral Cay successfully building strong relationships with students, teachers and other members of our local community.
CCC attends the 55th Founding Anniversary of Southern Leyte

Since the year 1960, every 1st of July the founding anniversary and independence of Southern Leyte has been celebrated in the Provincial Capital of Maasin. This year CCC was invited along to the 55th Founding Anniversary with the inspiring theme ‘I Love Southern Leyte’.

Daisy Gamale from the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte kindly organised for the whole CCC team to spend the night before in the currently unused ‘Girl Scouts of the Philippines’ building, right in the centre of the action! The celebrations kicked off that night with an outdoor party in the sunken garden overlooked by the Provincial Capitol Building. Much to the enjoyment of our scholars and volunteers, Maasin put on a live concert headlined by Filipino reggae band ‘Franco’ and followed by a disco that went on into the early hours of the morning.

At 7am the group were out of bed and in position in the Anatalio Gaviola Plaza to join the parade which journeyed through the sunny streets of Maasin. We were escorted by the moves and music of the local Drum and Bugle corps and finished up back at the sunken garden where we were warmly welcomed by PGSL officials on stage, including the Governor himself, the Honourable Sir Roger Mercado.
After the parade we proceeded to the nearby tree garden where a good friend of Coral Cay, Sir Rio Cahambing, was hosting a photo exhibition of marine life in Southern Leyte. A number of the photographs were taken by Coral Cay staff, with several snapped by our local Scuba Instructor Jesse Tinapay. We were all very proud to see Jesse's work in the limelight and admired by all who looked upon them.

Coral Cay is extremely honoured and grateful to have been invited along to celebrate such a momentous occasion. We very much look forward to taking part next year and can say with great enthusiasm “We Love Southern Leyte!”

The theme ‘I Love Southern Leyte’ was decorated around the city in preparation for the event.
CCC delivers First Aid training to local Barangay Officials

Barangay Sta. Paz Sur of the municipality San Francisco was the first to participate in our First Aid Training Programme. The participants were composed of interested barangay council members, barangay health workers (BHW) and police, led by Barangay Captain and ex Coral Cay scholar, the Honourable Sir Rodrigo Baluran.

Four days later we were joined by a second group of participants from our very own Barangay Napantao, headed by its exuberant Barangay Captain, the Honourable Sir Joy Condeza. Both groups fully shared in a thorough half-day training session which covers many important techniques, such as CPR, which is required to react quickly in a medical emergency. All students successfully completed their training and certificates have since been distributed.
that so many Barangay officials are First Aid certified we are confident that the local community of San Francisco are in safe hands!

CCC is delighted that this community First Aid training has been a great success. The participants were thrilled to learn this additional knowledge and information taught by our very own field base manager, Oliver McGuinness, helpfully translated by our brand new Education Officer, Maki. At Coral Cay, the local community is always at the heart of everything we do within our projects. We will continue to deliver First Aid training to different Barangays each month. If you would like to participate, please contact our Project Scientist.

Right: CCC Field Base Manager Olly delivers First Aid training to Honourable Captain Joy Condea and fellow members of the Napantao Barangay Council.
**Survey background:** Since January 2013, survey efforts have been focused on assessing potential and existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in and around 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.

At the request of the local Barangay Council of Catig, headed by the Honourable Captain Manolito, and Ma’am Benie Dipay of the Municipal Government of Liloan, Coral Cay have begun to survey local waters to determine its suitability for a Marine Protected Area. Catig is situated on the opposite side of Panoan Island, approximately a 1.5 hours journey from our base in Napantao on our trusty boat “Nudi Hunter”. Despite the distance our dedicated survey team comprised of Project Scientist Shannon, Science Officer Joe and a group of local and international volunteers have been working tirelessly to assess its coral reefs.

From what we have observed the reefs have already shown to have a lot to offer. A large field of branching coral houses numerous species of juvenile reef fish, previously unwitnessed by Coral Cay staff. So far, five out of eight transects have been completed and we aim to have fully surveyed the site by mid-August. Once this field work is complete, we will work to analyse the data collected and make our recommendations regarding the best location for an MPA in Catig.

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/](http://www.coralcay.org/science-research/scientific-reports/).
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 course 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.

Being a conservationist does not mean you must have a degree in marine science. Here at Coral Cay, we are looking for people who show the passion, initiative and dedication for helping in the protection of our underwater environment. True to this, Coral Cay would like to introduce our scholars for the month of July!

Jen Horn came to us as a certified SCUBA and skin diving enthusiast from Manila. Jen is a psychologist by profession who graduated from the prestigious school De La Salle University (DLSU). She is an active member of the well-known organization “Institusyon ng mga Skin Diver sa Ateneo” (ISDA) and, impressively, has started up her own company named MUNI - an organization which focuses on life sustainability. Jen has a true passion for all things environmental; she came to Coral Cay to enhance her knowledge of marine life and conservation and we are grateful that she also taught us a few things along the way.

Agatha Henry is a professional artist and skin diver from Baguio City, a graduate of the University of Philippines - Baguio. She dreams of become a SCUBA instructor and taking on our
scholarship was a starting point in achieving this ambition. Agatha is truly an asset to marine conservation; not only in terms of collecting data but also creating art that expresses the efforts made to preserve the marine environment. During her time here she decorated the halls of Coral Cay with incredible artwork depicting rare and endangered marine wildlife.

“One of my goals in joining CCC was to gain better knowledge and understanding of various marine life. And I’m now even more inspired to learn more and find ways to help preserve the richness of our seas even while we’re on land. I’m grateful for meeting everyone here at base, learning & diving together, sharing stories, playing games, and yes, karaoke! I certainly hope to stay in touch with the folks I’ve met here!”

- Jen Horn

“My CCC experience, was the funniest and the most amazing kind of learning I had in my life. I now have a different perspective of the ocean, I appreciate it even more than I did before. I have more knowledge on how to protect and help prevent damage to it. The CCC staff are the coolest and friendliest staff I have ever met. I won’t forget my co-scholars and volunteers. Thanks CCC for inspiring us, I hope you continue the legacy on spreading knowledge and protecting the ocean, I know I will.”

- Agatha Henry

We have no doubt that the knowledge that both girls have gained will come into play as they leave CCC and motivate more and more people to create a greater community of conservationists.

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

Coral Cay Conservation would like to introduce *Thuridilla carlsoni*, more commonly known as Carlson’s Sapsucking Slug, as Marine Creature of the Month.

These micro-critters can reach approximately 3cm in length and feed by sucking the fluid from algae and marine plants. Arguably, they rank among the most beautiful, vivid and photogenic organisms in the underwater world of coral reefs. Many of their members are rarely encountered during a dive and it is thought that many species are yet to be discovered. In fact, the known number of species continuously increases as we further explore the marine environment!

The tremendous range of colourful markings that run through the animals’ body length is the characteristic of sap-suckling slugs, which has helped them become famous among underwater photographers. These creatures differ from the closely related Nudibranch family by having no external gills.

This particular sap suckling slug was spotted by the keen eyes of our Science Officer, Joe Roche, at 8m depth during his first dive in Anilao, Lilo-an.

*Photo credit: Jesse Tinapay*
LEARN MORE!

To learn more about the project, to join the expedition, or to find out about local marine Scholarships, visit

www.coralcay.org