Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP)

Monthly Project Update

December 2015

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

Research Scientist: Joshua Milne (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

Coral Cay welcomes Marie Seraphim, our new Project scientist

Marie started diving at the age of 12 years old and this led to her falling in love with the ocean. Since then she has completed a Bachelor’s degree in Marine Biology and Ecology, and a Master’s degree in Marine Science and Management at the University of Sydney. While in Australia, she completed research on corals at a research station on the Great Barrier Reef. After graduating, she moved back to Europe and volunteered in several Marine Protected Areas around Croatia and France. Recently, she spent a year at the Marine Stewardship Council in London where she was part of the Science department with a focus on sustainable fisheries, outreach and training. She is now joining Coral Cay Conservation as Project scientist in the Philippines.

Marie Seraphim, CCC new Project scientist
Stories of the Month

Base closes for the holidays and staff Party

As the holidays draw close so Coral Cay closes for the festivities. On the 16th of December we finished all our work for the year and closed our doors for the Christmas break. With all our volunteers leaving and either going home or heading off travelling the world, the staff held our annual staff party.

Our local staff spent the entire day preparing the food with Tata cooking up a storm in the kitchen and Ricky, Bok Bok and Dudong preparing our nearly 60kg Pig on the spit roast, creating ‘lechón’. While the local boys cooked we began setting up table, speakers and decorations for the party outside. All of Coral Cay’s friends from around Southern Leyte, as well as everyone in the village were invited to the party and the turnout was great. We all enjoyed a great meal of lechón, rice and empanadas, everyone had their fill; even our dogs Coral and Shrimp were ready to burst with all the meat being passed around. After the meal we all shared drinks, talked and played games long into the night. It was a truly great way to celebrate a great year here at Coral Cay and relax after a strong year of work.

Year in Review

We have had an impressive year here at Coral Cay in the Philippines with much being done both in the water and out on land. This year we have completed 6 survey sites including Himayangan, Catig, Gudan, Punta and our two annual Napantao surveys. We have trained over 30 volunteers in PADI Advance Open water Scuba diving and our Skills Development Programme (SDP), with 15 being local Filipino scholars. In addition to these courses 6 of our volunteers as well as Dudong, our compressor operator, have completed their PADI Dive Masters during their time with us on base. In the community, we have held numerous reef ranger and community days on base and at many schools across the region. Our SEASTAR programme has gone from strength to strength with a number of schools achieving the gold standard. Finally, this year has given rise to our newly christened boat the NUDI HUNTER. As you can see it been a busy and exciting period at Coral Cay and we can’t wait to continue our work next year here in the Philippines, working alongside the government and local communities to educate and protect the waters of Southern Leyte.

A collection of group photo of our volunteers and staff throughout 2015. Thank you all for your time with us in CCC
Education and Community Projects

First AID course with the Brgy of Bongawisan

On the 15th of December we invited members of our neighbouring Brgy. Bongawisan to our base to complete a First Aid course. Headed by our field base manager Olly, in addition to Jesse our Community liaison Officer, the group of 12 had an excellent time learning basic first aid with much laughter coming from the room all day long. At the end of the day all members had successfully passed the first aid course with full confidence and had acquired the knowledge needed to help others in need.

SBSMMA Meeting

This month Coral Cay, alongside LA.MA.VE and MPARG, attended the Sogod Bay Sustainable Marine Management Alliance meeting (SBSMMA). This is a monthly meeting held to discuss the management plans across Sogod Bay, with all of the Municipality Agricultural Offices (MAO) across the bay being involved. It was great to see all the municipalities coming together to try to work as one to protect and manage the waters of Sogod Bay. The meeting started with all of the NGOs presenting a brief review of the work their organisation has done during 2015. Some amazing work has been done by our friends at LA.MA.VE and MPARG this year with MPARG mapping all the borders of Barangays, municipalities and the positions of the MPAs on the Eastern side of Sogod Bay while LA.MA.VE has continued their effort with the identification of the Whale Sharks in Sogod Bay and mapping their movements across the region.

Throughout the rest of the day discussion turned to the different agendas of the Alliance meeting including patrol boats, illegal fishing activity, spotlight fishing and the organisation of patrols for the coming year. It was interesting to learn of the different plans for the coming year and we hope that they come to full fruition. Once all the agenda points were finalised it was time to bring out the food, drink, play ping pong and sing karaoke. It was a great day and we all learned a lot about the politics and management strategies of Sogod Bay.
Survey Monthly Update

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 Research Scientist, Joshua Milne.

Surveys completed for the year!
This month we completed our assessment of the MPA of Punta with 4 survey completed inside and 4 outside of the MPA to give us a comparison. With this survey completed Coral Cay has finished all of its surveys for the year of 2015. Our volunteers have done a fantastic job this year, completing a total of 6 survey sites. If it wasn’t for the hard work of our international volunteers and local scholars we couldn’t do the amazing work we do. We would like to thank all our project partners who have help us this year in finding survey sites through Sogod Bay as well as facilitating meetings and the creation of MPAs. We can’t wait to continue working with you all in the New Year!

A collection of photo of our volunteers from 2015, doing what they love.

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. In recent months this programme has increased in popularity and we are now accepting applications for 2016!

Between November 11th and December 9th Coral Cay welcomed our last scholar of the year Jinefer Eusebio

Jinefer is 22, from San Ramon here in southern Leyte, and recently graduated with her BSc in marine biology from SLSU in Bontoc. As a recent graduate she wished to challenge herself in her chosen profession and live her dreams of exploring the deep blue. While originally shy around the other volunteers she came into her own when the Karaoke machine came out becoming the queen of pop! She also excelled during her SDP training and was part of the team who completed the last surveys of the year. But most importantly of all she loved to join Tata in the Kitchen and helped cook some amazing meals for all on base.

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/
Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project  
Philippines, December 2015

**Marine Creature of the Month!**

**Comet, *Callopesiops altivelis***

Every evening at Coral Cay Conservation our volunteers make nominations for ‘Marine Creature of the Day’. This is an opportunity for everyone to discuss what cool, new marine life they saw during that day of diving. At the end of the week we take a vote on ‘Marine Creature of the Week’ and then again at the end of the month. This December we have selected the **Comet, Callopesiops** as Marine Creature of the Month!

Also known as the Marine Betta, the Comet is a named for its large eye-shaped dorsal fin which resembles a comet racing through outer space and the stars made from the white dots on its primarily black body.

A nocturnal predator it hides in caves and crevasses during the day. During the night Comets come out feeding on crustaceans and small fish. They catch their prey by approaching it swimming sideways and then waiting for the prey to try to escape. As the prey tries to escape on the side of the fish, it escapes toward the Comet’s mouth which is ready to catch its un-suspecting prey. When the Comet finds itself in danger, this fish will poke its head into a hole and expose its tail end, which mimics the head of the moray eel.

![Comet, Callopesiops altivelis](image)

**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).