Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP)

Monthly Project Update

January 2015

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

Project Scientist: Marie Seraphim
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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

CCC Opens For 2016

It’s a brand new year here at Coral Cay and after our small time off over Christmas we are back at work with all new volunteers and staff members eager to begin diving and surveying. With a start of a new year we have an almost completely new volunteer team and have been training all the month of January in scuba diving and Science training preparing for survey to begin a new this February.
Story of the Month

CCC Welcomes New SCUBA Instructor Aoife Foley

Aoife is a marine mammal biologist from Ireland. After completing her degree on the west coast of Ireland, Aoife worked for the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group as a research assistant working on photo identification surveys of bottlenose dolphins in the Shannon Estuary. She then went to Australia to work with the University of Queensland on the BRAHSS (Behavioural Response of Australian Humpback whales to seismic surveys) Project. Aoife stayed working and travelling in Australia for most of 4 years. She worked on many cetacean research projects, lived on deserted islands and continued her scuba dive education. Aoife has travelled extensively throughout SE Asia and has recently become certified as a Padi Open Water Scuba Instructor in the Philippines. She has been working in the Philippines on the island of Negros and has recently joined the Coral Cay project in Southern Leyte.

Education and Community Projects

CCC Joins Napantao For Napantao Day

On the 27th and 28th of January Coral Cay was honored to be invited to the 8th annual Founding day festival of Napantao known as Napantao Day. On the 27th Napantao held the Music and dance competition. This had the different poroks competing against one another in Modern dance, Folklore Dance and Hawaiian dance as well as singing competitions in Solo, duets and Duble Kara. Olly McGuinness, Joshua Milne and Harry Simmon Were asked to judge the competition and had a great time watching the great variety of performance with all involved giving it there all and having a great time in the process.

The next night we were all invited back to the village for a village wide meal and to watch all the winning performances from the previous night. At the end of the night there was a disco and a few of us joined in dance alongside all the kids, teaching them some Western moves. Every one from Coral Cay greatly enjoyed being a part of the festivities and we are thankful to have been invited to join our neighbours in celebrating their founding.
**CASAAFI Come To Coral Cay For Reef Rangers**

Coral Cay Conservation was delighted to receive 12 students of CAASAFI high school over at their base for a Reef Rangers event on the 30th of January 2016. During this event, students had the opportunity to become guardians of the reef and to learn more about marine ecology and conservation.

After a brief introduction with staff and volunteers, the students gathered in the Science room for a morning of lectures and games. Students learned many new interesting facts about coral and fish biology. They were then taken snorkelling on the pristine Napantao house reef to experience the magic of the underwater world first hand. Volunteer guides pointed many different coral, fish, nudibranchs and two students were even lucky to spot a rare sea snake! After resting from the swim, the afternoon comprised of more lectures on coral reef threats and advice on how to protect the reef. It truly was a day full of adventure and fun.

Congratulations to all of the CAASAFI students that did wonderfully on the course and all proudly graduated as Reef Rangers! CCC hopes to see you again soon.

**CCC Assists In Setting Up Marker Buoys For Tabugon Sanctuary**

On the 7th of January, CCC was contacted to help set up marker buoys at the Tabugon MPA and Sanctuary. This was a great way to start the year and our two Project Scientists Joshua Milne and Marie Seraphim joined the Municipal Agricultural Office of Liloan staff. Armed with a GPS, they jumped on the boat and located the boundaries of the MPA. This was the result of years of hard work. In 2014 Liloan expressed the need for surveys of the Tabugon MPA and volunteers from Coral Cay Conservation undertook a one month monitoring of the area. As a result of this hard work and robust research, it was decided to alter the boundaries of the existing MPA to better protect marine life in the region. With the new marker buoys
fisher folk can easily distinguish the boundaries of the new Sanctuary. This will not only protect the reefs within but also the pristine mangrove ecosystems still present in the area. Mangrove forests are vital as they create perfect habitats for a variety of juvenile marine species.

CCC would like to thank everyone involved for letting us participate all the way through this exciting project. Our staff left the site with a huge sense of accomplishment. They were also kindly offered to try the local Butong and happily obliged!

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. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientist, Marie Seraphim.

This month has all been about training up our new volunteers in our Science Development Program (SDP). This is the program that all new volunteers go through to learn how to survey the reefs teaching them how to identify target fish and invertebrate species as well as different substrate, coral lifeforms and impact that cause harm to a reefs health. When you put it all together you can a look at the quality of a particular stretch of reef and it is this information we use to assess MPA and propose new ones. As we are in the process of training new volunteers there haven’t been any new surveys this month. However, in the coming months we are looking forward to continuing our efforts in surveying San Francisco, Lilo-an and possibly move further south into Pintuyan and maybe even across the bay.

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.

It’s a brand new year and we have brand New batch of Filipino Scholars ready to go. Our scholarship program is doing really well with half the year already booked with eager new scholars all passionate about the protecting the marine ecosystem. We are currently joined by two scholars from Iloilo, Precious (Pre) Gaurana and Dionn Hubag. They have already completed their PADI Scuba Advance Open Water and are now hard at working learning all they can through our Science Development Program.

Scholar Pre, with CLO Jesse Tinapay

Our two scholars Dionn and Pre diving with our RS
Joshua Milne

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, January 2016

**Marine Creature of the Month!**

CCC’s creature of the month for January 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.

Recently a Flamboyant Cuttlefish has been spotted multiple times out on Napantao house reef! An amazing sight seen by a handful of our volunteers we hope that like Coral Cay it will make Napantao its home so future volunteer can continue to see this spectacular creature.

*Photo Credit: Joel Brown*

**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.