Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
May 2016

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

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LRCP Project Aim

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP) 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 (PGSL). 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 welcomes Darienne Lancaster, Project Scientist

Darienne is very excited to be joining the Coral Cay team from Canada. She has worked on both the ecological and social sides of a variety of marine conservation projects. Her Masters research focused on Rockfish Conservation Areas in British Columbia, Canada where she looked at illegal recreational fishing within marine protected areas. Since then Darienne has also worked as the diver-in-charge on underwater fish surveying projects and as a researcher on underwater towed video surveys. Darienne has extensive experience as a cold-water scientific diver as well as sailing, boating, and generally having fun on the water. Darienne also has plenty of practice public speaking, having given numerous talks for the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canadian National Parks, and at aquariums and community centers. Darienne is a certified Canadian Association of Underwater Science diver and a PADI Rescue Diver.
Story of the Month

Coral Cay Conservation collaborates with PADI Project Aware for Dive Against Debris

This month Coral Cay volunteers completed a ‘Dive Against Debris’ to collect garbage on the reef in collaboration with PADI Project Aware. This dive was added to the global survey of underwater rubbish in our ocean. In the Philippines the pollution of our reefs is a major issue. Trash like plastic bags are particularly bad in the marine environment as turtles and other animals often eat them because they look like jellyfish. When animals eat plastic bags or other plastic debris it does not exit their bodies which can cause starvation due to the animal feeling full and therefore does not look for food to eat.

Coral Cay volunteers tackled the trash problem and spent the day collecting debris and garbage on Napantao house reef. The garbage collected included rubber, plastic, fishing lines wrapped around coral, a tin can and a piece of cardboard. We are proud to say that the rubbish that was removed can no longer harm marine life in Napantao. The data that was reported and is now recorded on the Project Aware website and will hopefully help drive real change in marine debris research and waste management.
Education and Community Projects

Reef Rangers event with Punta teenagers

On Friday May 27th a group of teenagers from Barangay Punta visited the Coral Cay Conservation base to become Reef Rangers. This great group of young conservationists learned all about coral reef ecology, different fish species, threats to coral reefs, and how to protect them. After brushing up on their reef knowledge and identification skills they all headed out onto Napantao MPA house reef for a hands on snorkelling adventure. The Reef Rangers also participated in an ocean themed scavenger hunt, a food chain race, and Marine Protected Area and ocean themed trivia. After these activities all 14 of the Punta visitors graduated to become certified Reef Rangers.

Coral Cay Conservation speaks at San Francisco Ocean Forum – Buhay Dagat, Buhay Natin

On May 26th Coral Cay Conservation Field Base Manager Oliver McGuinness spoke about CCC projects, the coral triangle, and the importance of coral reefs at the San Francisco Ocean Forum – Buhay Dagat, Buhay Natin. The event was organized to celebrate May as the Month of the Ocean. Other speakers included: Armando Ordiz Gaviola from PENRMO who talked about the role of local government in marine conservation; Jerome Jack Napala from SLSU who spoke about coral restoration; and Natasha Kunesch with MPARG who talk about remote sensing and coral mapping.

The event was well attended with locals from San Francisco, Napantao, and Punta, Barangay Captains and Bantay Dagats.
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, Darienne Lancaster.

We have finished survey work on a brand new site in Barangay Triana on Limasawa Island, which hosts a wide array of corals, invertebrates like long-spine sea urchins, and many different fish species. Check out some photos below.

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

Limasawa Triana
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 we are introducing our two scholars Jamaica Alcedo and Angeline Jacson. Jamaica has a BSc in Marine Biology from Aklan State University in the College of Fisheries and Marine Sciences and Angeline is already a PADI Advanced Diver and is currently studying Marine Biology at Silliman University in Dumaguete City.

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/

My experience at Coral Cay was awakening to say the least. From the moment I arrived at base, to the moment I had to force myself to say goodbye to newfound friends, I felt like I was finally doing something I was always meant to do. Getting a degree in Biology only takes you so far; it’s the practice and immersion in the field that really counts, and Coral Cay gave me an avenue for that. Meeting people who loved the sea as much as I did, going through the Skills Development Program with them, and finally conducting surveys for conservation of what we all believed was the world’s most beautiful and diverse resource – coral reefs – were some of the most gratifying things I have done. Every night at the base, I went to bed with my heart full, and every morning I woke up eager to learn more.

- Jamaica Alcedo

My CCC experience is a once in a lifetime experience. It was also the first time that a student from my school was privileged to be part of this learning experience. I hope that more students from my school will be able to join in the future to promote local marine conservation in my province. The coral seen in Napantao is one of the most beautiful I’ve seen and it’s amazing how a marine protected area influences the growth of its marine life and people should be more educated, especially the little children because they are the hope of this country. I love the fact that CCC does the ‘Reef Rangers’ and influences future marine conservationists in them. I see a bright future for the Philippines thanks to CCC.

- Angeline Lacson
CCC’s creature of the month for April is the **Whale Shark** (*Rhincodon typus*). Project Scientist Marie Seraphim and volunteers Jack Walton and Emily Jose were absolutely amazed to have a close encounter with a juvenile whale shark at Barangay Estela on the 10th of May 2016. The Coral Cay Conservation team has been surveying the waters of Barangay Estela for several weeks to determine the suitability for a potential MPA. While snorkelling in between dives, Project Scientist Marie saw a shark pass right by her side! Of course everyone jumped in the water and swam with this beautiful fish. Whale sharks are the biggest fish on Earth but this one must have been a juvenile as it was only about 3 or 4 meters long. This lucky encounter was made even more special by the fact that it is not currently whale shark season in Southern Leyte and we had not seen any sharks since January. Definitely a story to remember for many years. This May the sharks seem to be back in Sogod Bay as well, if only for a brief period, as there have been two more sighting this month. One off Napantao Reef’s south wall and one heading south out of Sogod Bay.