
Cambodia Reef Conservation Project (CRCP)

Monthly Project Update

June 2013

Location:

Prek Svey Village, Koh Rong, Sihanoukville, Cambodia

Project Manager - Sophie Clay



CRCP Project Aim

The Cambodia Reef Conservation Project (CRCP) is a collaborative project surveying the coral reefs of Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samloem Islands in the Municipality of Sihanoukville. The programme provides training and conservation education opportunities for local Cambodians as part of an integrated programme to develop local capacity, and to 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 Fisheries Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Contents

- Latest news
- Story of the Month
- Community Projects
- Survey Update
- Marine Creature of the Month

Latest News

This month has seen the arrival of new volunteers Vicky and Lauren, and our new Science Officer, Simon Miller, so a warm Coral Cay welcome to them! Simon graduated with a BSc in Geography from the University of Southampton and he developed his interest in marine conservation while completing his dissertation in Indonesia. Simon has travelled and worked around the world for a number of years, visiting America, Oceania and Asia. We are pleased to welcome him to our staff team onsite and look forward to benefitting from his knowledge and expertise.



CCC's new Science Officer, Simon Miller at our base in Prek Svey

June has also seen the establishment of the first committee meetings of the various NGOs operating in Prek Svey. These meetings bring together staff from CCC, Fauna and Flora International, the newly launched Song Saa Foundation, and a local midwife group, Life Options, to discuss achievements over the last month and upcoming activities and programs. These regular monthly meetings will provide a valuable platform to identify areas we can work together and complement each other's activities, as well as keeping everyone informed of what is happening in the village.



Story of the month

World Oceans Day was celebrated on Koh Rong with a joint effort by Coral Cay Conservation, Fauna and Flora International, the Fisheries Administration of the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia and Song Saa Private Island. The day began with opening speeches from the Fisheries Administration and Fauna and Flora International and progressed to include mangrove planting, beach clean ups and underwater clean ups.

Over 500 mangrove seedlings were planted on the beaches surrounding Prek Svey village. Mangroves play a key role within the wider marine ecosystem, providing critical breeding and nursery grounds for many species. A large number of fish found on coral reefs will spend a part of their life cycle in mangrove habitats so planting more mangroves provides direct benefits to reefs and other marine ecosystems! They also provide important coastal defences, sources of food and materials, and are a major contributor to carbon sequestration. Mangroves today face severe threats globally, from issues including climate change, coastal development, over-harvesting and pollution, therefore emphasising the importance of these ecosystems on World Oceans Day can help raise awareness of these challenges and encourage protection and conservation.



CCC's Project Manager, Sophie Clay, planting mangroves for World Oceans Day

Over 10 bags of rubbish were collected from Prek Svey beaches by teams of people including CCC's Project Coordinator, Sok Sopheary. In addition to this a further 55kg of rubbish, mainly fishing nets, lines, ropes and plastics, was collected from underwater by SangKat village by CCC's Field Base Manager, Ben Thorne, Science Officer, James Clark, and Project Manager, Sophie Clay and Jelena Vukosavljevic from Song Saa. Plastics are a major source of pollution of the world's oceans so by gathering such a large amount of debris together helped illustrate what can happen when rubbish is incorrectly disposed of and help create more responsible behaviour.

The day was a huge success, with around 150 members of the Prek Svey community getting involved in various activities and considerable awareness raised about the

Cambodia Reef Conservation Project June 2013



importance of the marine environment. It was also a fantastic opportunity to bring together various project partners in a combined event, many thanks to all involved in organising this special day!



People from Prek Svey Village celebrate World Oceans Day

Community and Education Projects

This month CCC's Project Coordinator, Sok Sopheary, has been continuing to teach environmental education at Prek Svey's Secondary School. Since the end of May, 20 Grade 5, 6 and 7 students have been treated to fun and informative lessons about the natural world around them. Lessons began with a general introduction to the environment and have gone on to cover important topics such as water, garbage and climate change. Lessons have also incorporated activities for World Oceans Day and will culminate with celebrations of Cambodian National Fish Day on 1st July.



Students and CCC staff paint their nails to symbolise their promise to look after their seas and practice sustainable fishing

The students have learnt a lot about the environment, how it works and what they can do to help protect it. They have been fascinated to discover the linkages between different aspects of the environment and enjoyed getting involved in practical activities like cleaning their beaches and mangrove planting. Sopheary's lessons have

Cambodia Reef Conservation Project June 2013



“They were so surprised when they understood the relationship between causes, effects and solutions for environmental issues, because they had never thought about this before.”

Sok Sopheary (CCC Project Coordinator)

aimed to reach the heads and the hearts of her students and have focussed on facilitating independent thinking through interactive activities such as drawing, singing songs, writing poems and playing games.

Survey Update

Survey background: Our baseline-surveying programme is designed to gather data about the biological and morphological standing of Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samloem Islands. This data is combined with information on human and natural impacts on the reefs, along with oceanographic data, to ultimately produce a Geographical Information System 'map' of the various habitats of the islands. It is like a 'stock-take' of the current marine resources. This will provide policymakers and concerned institutions with information necessary to effectively manage those resources. We are also monitoring the reefs for signs of bleaching, following the mass bleaching event in 2010.



CCC's Science Officer, James Clark, recording debris gathered on clean up dives.

Despite some challenging weather conditions this month, we have progressed with surveys on the more sheltered areas of Koh Rong. Some of the survey sites have been very interesting, with large numbers of anemonefish and some huge schools of parrotfish, along with some of the largest fish we have recorded to date on surveys! Science Officer, James has now started bringing our latest volunteers and staff up to speed on our target species. In addition we have been complementing our survey

work with underwater clean ups to remove debris that can cause harm to the marine environment. The largest of these was planned to coincide with World Oceans Day on the 8th June, but also additional clean ups have been conducted in areas we have identified during surveys as having lots of rubbish. Our underwater clean-up work has been assisted by Song Saa Private Island staff and data gathered on the debris removed is submitted to PADI's Project AWARE to help inform global statistics.

Marine Creature of the Month

Family Cypraeidae

***Cypraea tigris* - Tiger cowrie**

These beautiful molluscs feed on algae, sponges and other detritus and we are fortunate to see them frequently in crevices and under rocks around our survey sites. This tiger cowrie has its mantle fully extended, the mantle continuously lays down a shiny enamel surface and also assists in camouflaging the cowrie from predators. Cowries are highly threatened and often rare due to their value as curios for the tourist trade so we are pleased to see such a healthy population in these waters!



Learn More!

To learn more about CCC's Cambodia project, to join the expedition, or to find out about local Marine Scholarships, visit www.coralcay.org.