

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
April 2017

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.

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Latest News

CCC welcomes Sarah Mynott, Science Officer



A geographer by training, Sarah has a broad range of environmental interests which extend far beyond flags and capital cities. Her love of people and of knowledge saw her become a secondary school geography teacher for five years, of which she loved almost every minute – she could probably have done without the marking! However, her thirst for new challenges lead her to undertake an MSc last year in environmental philosophy and politics, writing a thesis concerning the perception of wild animals in urban space. She has a practical side to her as well, and upon first hearing about Coral Cay Conservation on the radio, she immediately signed up to volunteer with them in Cambodia back in summer 2014. She was (metaphorically) hooked. Being given the opportunity to combine her long-standing passions for coral reefs,

environmental action, and education in her role as Science Officer in the Philippines is a dream come true for Sarah. Having previously volunteered for CCC, Sarah has a great deal of respect for this organization and its mission, and hopes that her enthusiasm and experience will help make the project as effective and as enjoyable as it can be.

Stories of the Month

Coral Cay Conservation Crater Lake excursion

On April 23rd eleven members of the CCC team went to Cabalian Crater Lake in Southern Leyte. Our first stop was in San Juan, where we were able to meet the tourism officer who accompanied us to our start point where we met two Filipino tour guides for the day. After riding motorbikes for an hour, we started our one-hour long walk to the lake, hiking up and down mount Cabalian and crossing rivers while being surrounded by beautiful rainforests and exuberant nature. After having lunch, and swimming in the beautiful and cold lake, we started our descent to the village; it took three hours and a lot of effort but, there is no doubt, no one will forget that day on the Crater Lake. However, our adventure didn't finish there! After enjoying the exciting landscapes that Southern Leyte had to offer, we were invited to a nice dinner with the tourism officer in San Juan. Finally, with everyone exhausted after the long day, it was time to return to base and prepare ourselves for our next day.



CCC volunteers and staff during their excursion to Cabalian Crater Lake – Photo. Andrea Gaurana.

Coral Cay Conservation & 4Ocean's Earth Day Event

The CCC Earth Day event in Napantao, Southern Leyte, in collaboration with 4Ocean, was a resounding success by all accounts, collecting an impressive amount of waste from the beach, raising awareness of marine trash issues with local children, and helping to build a positive relationship between CCC and the local community.

With the word having been spread in Napantao beforehand by the local CCC staff and volunteers, children started to arrive at the beach where they were greeted by CCC personnel at the registration desk and litter collection station, to explain the nature of the day and the importance of preventing litter from getting into the ocean.



Group photo at the end of the event during the Earth Day Beach Clean – Photo. Morgan Fujimoto.

The two main activities organized for the afternoon were the beach clean-up competition and an opportunity for snorkelling with CCC members and learn about reef fish identification. In the 'Fish ID' station they were taught to identify and make the relevant hand signals for some of the key fish families found on our house reef, with pictures, puppets, and games to make the learning visual, fun, and interactive. Those who then wanted to snorkel made their way to the CCC base, but, before going in the water there was a chance to experience what it might be like to breathe underwater using SCUBA gear at a makeshift 'bubble station'. For some of the children, it was their first time being able to see beneath the waves with a mask and they were excited and enthralled by the experience, which we hope will lead to their value of the marine environment increasing.



Finally, everyone was thanked for the part they had played in the event and was reminded about the importance of preventing rubbish from getting into the ocean. In the end, 24 children aged between 6 & 16 registered for the event, and we collected around 1000 pieces of rubbish, weighing in at 15kg in total (4kg recyclables and 11kg general waste – and please remember how light plastics can be!). However, we achieved much more than a simple litter pick: we engaged a significant number of local children in marine issues and opened their eyes to the beauty of their reef, while going some way to build stronger connections between CCC and our local community, which will hopefully lead to longer-lasting and further-reaching positive impacts in the future.

"Earth Day at Coral Cay was unforgettable. Watching the children while participating in the activities for cleaning the beach was inspiring. Teaching the kids how to snorkel improved my communication with small children. Watching them and listening to their answers on what kind of fish and/or type of fish they have seen made me very happy that I took part in the Earth Day celebration."

Adrian, CCC Scholar, Philippines

"It was inspiring to see such young children participating, while staying so engaged and positive throughout. It was a pleasure to teach them about some of the local fish species, especially with everyone's excitement and eagerness to learn."

Ellie, CCC Volunteer, Australia

Education and Community Projects

Coral Restoration Projects

The coral reefs in Southern Leyte are important fishing grounds, and some of the most biodiverse reefs in the world. However, some reefs are degraded following episodic disturbances, including blast fishing and storm damage. This coral restoration and habitat creation project is in its initial steps, and aims for employing a low-tech and cost effective methodology to grow and transplant corals in Southern Leyte. This project has the potential to deliver cost-effective conservation and livelihood benefits that enhance reef habitat, support local communities, will enhance and create coral habitat in the region and, ultimately, protect the Philippines' precious marine biodiversity.



Sir Bandy, from San Francisco LGU visiting our coral restoration site – Photo. Tristan Brown.

In the first steps of the project a coral nursery will be established within the barangay of Napantao's Fish Sanctuary. Primary research will inform the development of 'best practice' restoration methods for the region, which will be shared with stakeholders through capacity development programmes to maximize scale-up and conservation value.

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, Felipe Lei.

During April, Coral Cay Conservation was able to finish the re-assessment of the Napantao MPA, and thanks to our great team we could finish a baseline survey in an already existing fish sanctuary located in Punta (Libagon). Furthermore, two proposed locations to place MPAs are being surveyed, one in San Barnardo (Limasawa) and another in Cogon (Pintuyan).

Scientific reports from all CCC surveyed sites around the world are available on our website at <http://www.coralcay.org/science-research/scientific-reports>

Photos provided by CCC volunteers during the month of March



Lion Fish on South Wall



Scorpionfish resting in Napantao MPA



Napantao MPA



Anemone city, Napantao



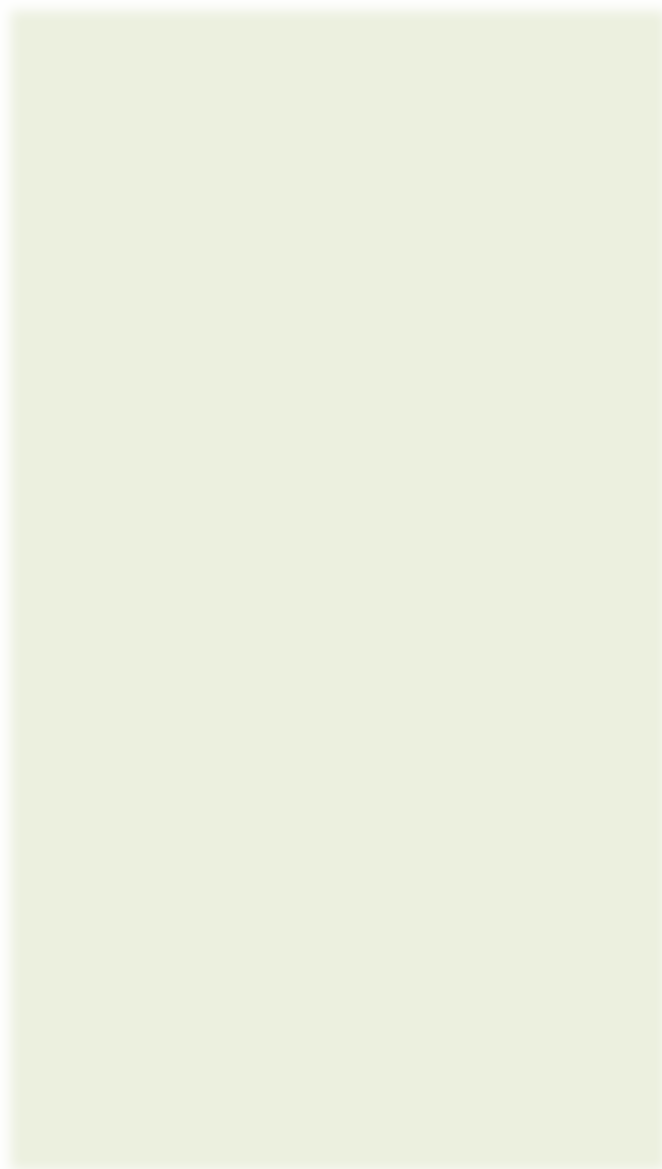
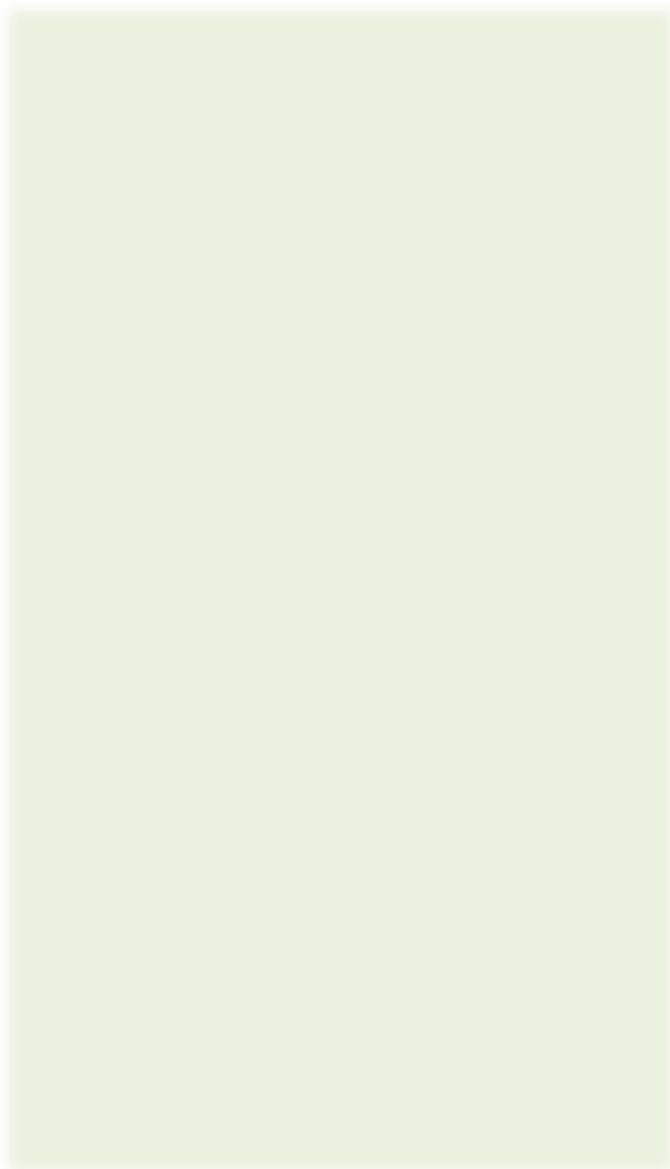
Cogon MPA (Pintuyan)

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 marine surveys of the coastline.

This month we welcomed Vincent Jay Gado from Calapan City with an MSc Marine and Lacustrine Science and Management, and Rean Paul Baldoza from Davao with a BSc in Biology; both eager to learn more about coral reefs and pursue a career in Marine Ecosystems and conservation.

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!

Our creature of the month is the **Juvenile Many-spotted Sweetlips** (*Plectorhinchus chaetodonoides*), also known as the harlequin sweetlips, is a native species from the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific found near coral reefs from 1 to 30 meters.

The juveniles have a very different aspect than a full-grown adult, they are brown with large white spots. One characteristic is that they swim in a very distinctive way, mimicking the movement of a poisonous flatworm for defense against predators. The juveniles are often found alone, close to caves and cavities on coral reefs or lagoons.

With age, juveniles will gain more spots and these spots will change from white to black, and the colour of the body will turn from brown to white. Sweetlips can be found solitary or in groups and are nocturnal predators feeding on smaller fish and benthic crustaceans.

The Many-spotted Sweetlips can grow up to 72 centimeters and can be distinguished from other fishes by their large lips on both the upper and lower jaws.



Photo by Felipe Lei

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