

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)

Monthly Project Update
July 2017

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

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LRCP 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 Javier del Campo, Project Scientist



Javier has always been passionate about nature, especially marine life as he was born in the Canary Islands and has always been very close to the sea. This deep passion led him to study environmental sciences with a specialization through an MSc in Conservation of Nature. His MSc thesis focused on ecosystem-based coastal management. Since his early career, he has been working in marine research, protected areas use and endangered species management. He is a Divemaster and a freediver. He is also keen on studying other cultures and ways of life so he also studied a Master's degree

in International Cooperation and Development. In order to link these two interests, he has been working in places such as Morocco, Cape Verde or Senegal, in projects that aim to empower local communities, ensuring the conservation and sustainability of natural resources. He is looking forward to joining the CCC team in the Philippines!

CCC welcomes Rachel Taylor, Scuba Instructor



Rachel first started travelling 5 years ago after finishing her BSc in Zoology. She did her first ever dive in Egypt when she was 19 and after that was hooked! Rachel did a Divemaster internship in Australia and afterwards moved onto Jamaica, then Mexico, where she did her Instructor training. Rachel's most recent job was managing a dive centre on a small island resort in the Philippines. She applied to volunteer for Coral Cay as soon as she saw the advert as she has always wanted to help make a difference and look after the underwater world that she enjoys so much. Rachel is very excited to join the Coral Cay team and is looking forward to expanding her knowledge of conservation and sharing her love of diving with everyone here.

Stories of the Month

Coral Cay Conservation Crater Lake excursion



The CCC team at Cabali-an lake – Photo. Pau Pamplona

On July 22nd, eight members of the CCC team went to Cabali-an Crater Lake in Southern Leyte for a day of adventure. After our early start, we met our two Filipino tour guides for the day just before starting our ascent. After a four-hour ascent to the lake, through rocky roads and jungle, hiking up and down the hills of mount Cabali-an, we arrived to the top with an amazing view of the lake, beautiful rainforests and exuberant nature. Not all of us were brave enough to have a swim in the cold lake, but some even swam to a small island in the middle of the lake to take a picture.

After having lunch and rest from our hike, we started our descent to the village, where our transport was waiting for us. This time, the descent was faster, it took three hours to make it to our start point and start heading back to base. Finally, with everyone exhausted after the long day, it was time to return to base and prepare ourselves for our next adventure. The day required a lot of effort but, there is no doubt, no one will forget the day at the Crater Lake.

Anahawan Hot Springs Trip



CCC Team in Anahawan Hot Springs. Photo: Pau Pamplona

After having to cancel plans to go on a hike due to rain, a group of staff and volunteers from CCC were looking for an alternative Sunday adventure on our day off from training and surveying. We came across the idea of Anahawan Hot springs in a simple Google search, and decided it would be a perfect way for a group to spend a cold rainy day. After an hour in the van we arrived and we asked for directions in Barangay Mainit, where we also picked up cold drinks and snacks. We found the springs easily, and all sat in the warm (if not a little smelly) sulphur-water, relaxed, chatted and got to know each other a little better. The owners were away in Tacloban for the weekend, however a relative came and apologized, collected the small fee and wished us a nice day. The springs were a clean, relaxing environment, with many nippa huts, and other families also having lunch soon joined us. I will be highly recommending a visit to the springs to all our volunteers in the future.

Education and Community Projects

2nd International and 6th National Conference on Environmental Science (ICES).

CCC is attending the coming International Conference on Environmental Science held in Manila. The three-day conference will be starting on the 3rd of August and will finish on the 5th, and we are very happy to be accepted as one of the speakers during the conference, where we will be presenting our findings, challenges and achievements of our work in the Philippines and more specifically in Napantao. Benjamin Jack, our Field Base Manager, will be presenting our work - "Small-Scale MPAs, Local Communities and their Future in the Philippines – Experiences from Napantao, Sogod Bay" during the second day of the conference.

The session is based upon the recently produced Triennial analysis of Napantao MPA assessing its current efficacy on the biological communities of Napantao from 2013 - 2015, the lessons learnt, and how can these be applied in a wider context to areas of Southern Leyte and Sogod Bay. The report can be found at www.coralcay.org/scientific-research/scientific-reports.

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.

Coral Cay Conservation finished surveying a proposed MPA area in San Bernardo (Limasawa). CCC, by request of the Local Government Unit (Liloan), will be heading next to President Quezon (Maugoc) to survey a proposed area to place a new MPA. Also, by the request of the provincial government, CCC will survey four different MPAs in Libagon, and this will allow the gathering of baseline data for future assessments for these MPAs established around the late 90's.

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 July



Spot-tail butterflyfish



Baby turtles hatching on the beach



Black Sea Horse



Feather Star

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 Gizelle Lim from Marikina City, and Joaquin Lacson from Davao City; studying BS in Civil Engineering and Geology respectively. Both are coming from different backgrounds, but both passionate about conserving and expand their knowledge in marine 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/>



"At first, I was skeptical about what I was getting myself into, but it turned out to be one of the greatest things I've done in my life! I've always been involved in charity works, etc., and it feels great to be with the people that share the same passion in life as me —not only in marine life but also in reaching out to communities.

To CCC, keep doing what you do! I know that you will not be in the Philippines forever, but with your training and guidance, we (the scholars) will continue what you have started. (Maybe we can discover a way to find out whether Culcitac are soft even if we don't touch it!)

To any potential future scholars, I am proud of your decision to join CCC. No matter what reason you may have for joining, you will be part of something bigger than yourself and that is enough! Enjoy and good luck!."

—
Gizelle M. Lim



"My stay with Coral Cay was an experience of a lifetime! SDP was cool as ever, opening my eyes to a brand-new light and dive training was amazing especially with CCC's new SCUBA Instructor. I remember how we'd have movie nights and mango float for every occasion. My stay was amazing especially with the lifelong friends I made. I'd never trade the experience with anything else. My message? There will be times when things get rough and there will come a point in your stay when the sound of a three-day will traumatize you but you should remember one thing: don't give up. Everything will turn out good if you just push right through the end".

—
Joaquin S. Lacson

Marine Creature of the Month!

Our creature of the month is the **Onespot Rabbitfish (or Blotched Foxface)** (*Siganus unimaculatus*). Belonging to the Siganidae family, also known as rabbitfishes, its identification features are the yellow body with elongate black blotch, the white head with black band from protruding snout to dorsal fin and the black edge on gill cover. Living in coral-rich areas, where it often shelters in staghorn coral. It can grow up to 30 cm long. The dorsal spine is poisonous and extremely painful but normally the Rabbitfish is not dangerous as it is quite shy. It takes its common name from its snout which could resemble that of a rabbit.

It is found in the Indo-Pacific Region, from SW Japan and the Philippines to NW Australian Shelf. It is easily found in coral reefs in the Philippines and it is one of the species that can be seen in the MPA Napantao, among others.

The juveniles occur in schools, but begin to form pairs at a length of about 10 cm which are believed to be maintained throughout life – termed monogamy. The monogamous pair are territorial, patrolling one patch within their coral reef range. The rabbitfish is diurnal and herbivorous, feeding on benthic algae, therefore by maintaining algal growth, they keep the coral reef in a healthy state; preventing harmful algal overgrowth that would smother and kill coral.

The Rabbitfish is targeted by the aquarium trade and is also regarded as good food fish so it is important that sustainable management practices are in place to prevent overfishing.



Photo: Charlie Luke

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