

Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (LRCP)



Monthly Project Update

April 2018

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 our new Science Officer (SO), Jasmine Corbett!



Jasmine has always felt an affinity with the underwater world and feels most at peace when observing the unusual life reefs have to offer. Whilst studying a degree in Marine and Natural History Photography, she became increasingly aware of not only the devastating impacts being placed on marine environments today, but how dependant populations are on these environments for their livelihoods. Unfortunately marine conservation issues are “out of sight, out of mind” for many people, so she wants to promote these issues to the masses and alter people's perspectives through a combination of scientific research and compelling visual media. She now looks forward to contributing to Coral Cay's work, educating volunteers and community members of the incredible life the underwater world has to offer, and why it so desperately needs our help in its preservation.

Welcome to the CCC team, Jaz!

Stories of the Month

Skills Development Programme, April 2018

April has brought us Alice, Julie, Ceci and Michelle (Scholar) to undertake the Skills Development Programme (SDP)! Two weeks of advanced buoyancy, identification, and underwater sizing and survey practice was all it took to get these four in shape to assist CCC in April's survey efforts. In addition to this, they have gained valuable knowledge in understanding how

the recording of specific marine creatures can act as indicators of change, giving us key information about the health status of our reef systems if monitored over a long-term period of time.

Alongside this training, Dom (Volunteer) has furthered his survey skills and stepped up to the role of being a survey leader, whilst impressing up CCC's knowledge of soft corals species identification and adding a new lecture to our database! Not only has this team played an integral role behind the survey efforts of Barangay Cagbungalon, but in the organisation and creativity behind this month's community efforts.

To say farewell and thank you to April's volunteers, the team hosted a bonfire night with marshmallow's and music to wind down after another productive month at CCC!

CCC Welcome our new Divemaster, Maisy Fuller!

Since welcoming Maisy (SO) onto site in November 2017, between lecturing and survey training, she has managed to undertake the necessary requirements, exams, workshops and briefings required to complete her Divemaster training, and officially become a PADI Professional! To officially congratulate Maisy on her new Divemaster status, Instructor (and mentor) Raf put together a graduation ceremony plus a final test to officiate Maisy to the professional ranks!



Another productive month for
CCC in Southern Leyte!
- Photos by Chelsea Waters (PS).

Education and Community Projects

Anislagon Community Day!

Wednesday 11th of April saw the return of CCC to Anislagon to conduct a community day, due to this year's survey efforts seeing the re-assessment of Anislagon's reef. The coastal water's of Anislagon is about to be a part of a very important network of MPAs throughout Sogod Bay. Whilst this community day was a celebration on taking a step towards a more sustainable future, it was also a reminder that MPA's don't manage themselves, and they do require communal support. Whether they are fisherman or farmers, they all have a vital role to play in protecting Anislagon's MPA, both for themselves and future generations. The topic of the community day, was one way in which they could manage the success of their MPA from their own home: controlling plastic waste.

Around 20 members from the community attended the morning event with great enthusiasm. Jesse (CLO) and Michelle (Scholar) lead the presentations in Visayan, generating awareness of the problems and threats associated with plastic items, adding a game of trivia to give an understanding on the scale of the issue. Whilst the problem of plastic gets bigger, CCC aimed to team up with the community of Anislagon to create a solution: Ecobricks. A workshop was conducted by Jesse on the tools required to create an Ecobrick, and the sheer number of objects and buildings that can be made with them. All of the learning was applied by conducting a beach clean to collect the items that could be used inside of an Ecobrick, followed by an Ecobrick making workshop. All components of the morning were well received by the community, who displayed non-stop enthusiasm towards this innovative idea towards the re-use of plastic items.



All smiles after a successful day with the community of Anislagon, who made their first Ecobrick!

- Photo's by Gareth Turner (FBM) and Chelsea Water's (PS).

Napantao Move Night

Tuesday April 24th saw the return of CCC's monthly movie nights, with our Napantao neighbours invited onto site to view the documentary "A Plastic Ocean". With popcorn in hand, the children followed carefully and with shock as a team of divers, photographers and scientists set out on a journey to capture and investigate the devastating effects plastic has caused to our marine environment. Following the screening, Jesse (CLO) held a discussion session, targeting subjects like "What are ways we can limit our plastic use in the future?"

Here's what they came up with...

- Think REUSABLE, not disposable.
- Avoid plastic containing products where possible.
- Collect plastics, and create your very own Ecobricks.
- Tell our friends and families about what you have learnt so we can keep spreading the message!

Napantao Reef Rangers

Saturday the 28th of April brought 12 school children from the Barangay of Napantao to participate in some eco activities that they can now develop during their summer vacation. Games and lectures on coral reef ecology, reef creature identification, food chains and threats to our

coral reef ecosystems were presented by Jesse in Visayan throughout the morning, followed by a scavenger hunt, games and songs organised by CCC's very own volunteers! To finish the morning on a high, CCC's staff and volunteers conducted a snorkel around Napantao's Fish Sanctuary. For some, this was a first-time snorkelling experience. For others, this was the perfect opportunity to show off how much they had learnt that morning on underwater creature identification, and refine their snorkelling skills under the supervision of trained staff and volunteers.



The children of Napantao participating in CCC's eco activities during their summer holiday.

- Photos by Gareth Turner

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, Chelsea Waters.

In 2018, CCC will be using a revised approach to assess the effectiveness of CCC's previous efforts in establishing Marine Protected Area's (MPAs) with the goal of understanding the barriers associated to their establishment in the Southern Leyte Province. This month, CCC returned to Barangay Cagbungalon within the Municipality of Liloan between April 6th to 25th, to conduct a reassessment on benthic composition, fish biomass and abundance. Results from this survey will be used in comparison to CCC's previous survey efforts of the reef surrounding Cagbungalon (22nd April to 2nd May 2014) to gain an understanding on the health status of non-protected reefs throughout Sogod Bay.

What is BACI?

Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) studies are an uncommon approach utilized for assessing the efficacy of small-scale MPAs with varying aims and objectives (e.g. protection of fish assemblages, benthic communities, and commercial biomass for fishery support). The Leyte Reef Conservation Project has, to date, practiced two-phases; Phase I (2002 – 2012) focusing on the collection of bio-physical data to assess the coral reef associated biological community composition within Sogod Bay, Southern Leyte; and Phase II (2012 – 2017) to collect further bio-physical data in spatially restricted locations at greater resolution to provide recommendations to local government units (LGUs) and stakeholders for the establishment of small-scale MPAs ($n= 29$ independent surveyed sites). Therefore, the outputs of these phases provides CCC with a unique opportunity to utilize baseline data that aimed to provide local stakeholders with recommendations for MPA establishment, to provide resource managers with critical data on the performance of their MPAs. Through a three-tiered approach (collection of scientific data, education and outreach, and capacity building), CCC have expertise in working alongside MPA stakeholders and the local user-group level, and therefore will incorporate the MPA MEAT (MPA Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool), in combination with the BACI approach.



The CCC team altogether for the final survey day at Cagbungalon.

- Photo by Rafael Manrique (SI).

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.

CCC welcomed Michelle Maglasang (MM) to the scholarship programme this month! Prior to her involvement with Coral Cay Conservation, MM was preparing to migrate to Norway just a few months after her CCC experience. Plans to move away from her home country changed in just a few days after her first check dive on Napantao Reef, blown away by the beauty and fragility of what existed in her own backyard. MM was an incredibly valuable member of the CCC team, leading community day workshops, and developing the Bisaya Learning Guide for CCC's future staff and volunteers. MM will now be pursuing a graduate degree in Environmental Science locally in the Philippines.

"My message to CCC is a big, fat thank you for the opportunities they provided me. I am highly grateful to the team for their confidence in me, which only helped bolster mine. The CCC project not only helped developed my underwater survey skills, but drastically improved my self-confidence."

To future CCC scholars, make the most of your stay at CCC. The lessons and experiences you gain in the program will be highly valuable both personally and professionally. I hope that the house reef and the local community strengthen your love for the country and inspire you to work towards the preservation of the Philippine seas."

- MM Maglasang

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/>



A snapshot series of MM's month with CCC.

- Photo's by Chelsea Waters (PS).

Marine Creature of the Month!

CCC's *Creature of the Month* goes to the Flamboyant Cuttlefish (*Metasepia pfefferi*), recently identified during CCC's practice survey component of the Skills Development Programme in Napantao Fish Sanctuary.



Left: Flamboyant Cuttlefish identified feeding during CCC's practice survey component of the Skills Development Programme in Napantao Fish Sanctuary (Photo by Maisy Fuller (SO)). Right: Flamboyant Cuttlefish identified during a night dive within the Municipality of Pintuyan. (Photo by Kate Meyer).

Cuttlefish are known for their ability to quickly alter their total appearance, or body pattern, to camouflage or to communicate with predators, prey and conspecifics. The Flamboyant Cuttlefish employs complex and varied camouflage to stalk its prey, and can often be found walking or "ambling" over the sea floor while rhythmically waving the wide protective membranes over their arms. This behaviour advertises a poisonous nature, with the flesh of this cuttlefish containing a unique toxin that makes them dangerous for consumption.

The cuttlebone, is a hard internal structure (internal shell) found in all members of the cuttlefish family (Family Sepiidae). It is a chambered, gas-filled shell used for buoyancy control. Due to the small size of the Flamboyant Cuttlefish's cuttlebone (maximum body length of ~8cm), it can only float for a short period of time. This is the only species of cuttlefish that is known to walk upon the sea floor.

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