

Roatán Marine Park Newsletter

January 2010 Highlights



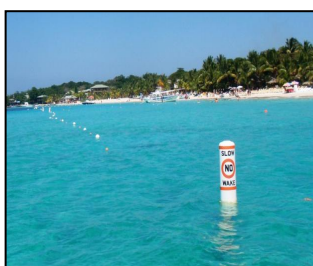
Change of management

With Grazzia having left for Germany for 6 months, Nic has once again taken over the role as manager for the RMP until her return. He hopes to combine his time in the office and on the water to meet all of the roles in running the organization.



SBWEMP and RMPSSC Patrols

This month 3 people were sent to jail, and the Police confiscated 6 masks and snorkels, 4 sets of fins, 4 conch, 4 spears, 2 spear guns, a torch, a knife and a sea fan.



Marine Infrastructure

Two new swim zones were installed in West Bay, creating a large percentage of the beach now a boat free zone. Two new channel markers were installed with solar beacons in West End.



Lionfish Update

Of the 161 recorded sightings, 123 were killed, giving us a 76% success rate. The top 3 dive shops were Ocean Connections West Bay (26), Native Sons (19) and West End Divers (17). The heaviest caught, 204g, was by Marco Alvarado from Coconut Tree



Education statistics

With Grazzia gone, we currently don't have a director of education. We did however manage to send volunteers to visit the kid at ESBIR and Children's Palace.

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Introduction

With Grazzia having left for Germany at the beginning of the year and not scheduled to return until August, the RMP have been somewhat short handed this past month. With the 2010 budget and work plan, meetings, projects, grant proposals, we have been somewhat swamped with a continuous amount of work. Thankfully, with help from numerous volunteers both in the office and in the field, we have been able accomplish a great deal so far this year. With the start of a new year, the RMP hopes that with our staff and through the help of volunteers, we will be able to accomplish even more in 2010.

Patrols

Sandy Bay West End Marine Park Patrols

January was an exceptionally quiet period, during which our Park Rangers did not make any arrests or confiscations. This is not to state, however, that no offences occurred. Our office received reports over several weekends involving suspicious activity in Mangrove Bight. Unfortunately, the suspects managed to evade our patrols on both occasions by paddling to the Berinche just before the patrols arrived. We ask residents of the Bight to remain vigilant and to call our office to report suspicious activity. With your help, we are confident we can apprehend the poachers. A further incident involved a charter boat collecting lobster and crabs while their cruise ship guests were in the water on a snorkeling tour. To avoid detection by our patrols, the boat captain moored near other boats conducting snorkeling tours. Since hearing of these incidents, our Park Rangers have been keeping a close eye on the suspects and aim to apprehend them on their next day trip. We ask the public to please call our office and inform a member of our staff whenever anything suspicious is seen, even it appears the perpetrators have already left. This way we can plan a sting or stake-out and attempt to catch the violators during their next attempt.



Our Park Rangers on the patrol boat in Half Moon Bay



Confiscated masks, fins, and spear guns

Though our Park Rangers did not make any arrests this month, it is reassuring to know that police we've previously employed continue to enforce regulations learnt through working with us. After thieves stole prize cockerels from a residence in West End, the police were on the lookout for suspicious characters. In the evening three suspects who matched the descriptions provided were searched by the Tourist Police as they entered West End in a taxi. The men were arrested and imprisoned for being in possession of snorkel gear and spear guns and were charged with "Intent to Poach." The three men arrested were unknown to our Park Rangers, who were not able to determine if they had a boat or were planning to swim from the shore to do their poaching. At any rate, we are grateful that they were apprehended before they even managed to hit the water. Evening patrols are always extremely difficult to coordinate and their success depends greatly on the

community providing us with important information including; location, description of suspects, vehicle/boat used, time of entry and exit etc.

South Side Chapter Patrols

With the boat from Barefoot Cay monitoring the waters from the airport east to Oak Ridge, 5 or 6 days a week, finding illegal activity is not the problem, but rather having limited funds for expanding patrols is. January saw the Park Ranger, along with the Policia Preventiva, confiscate four spears, three masks and snorkels, two pairs of fins, four conchs, and one seafan. These two incidents occurred in Dixon Cove and French Cay.

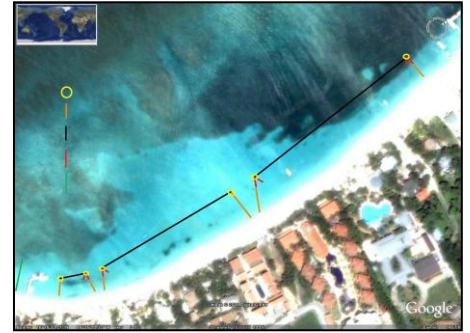


Confiscated masks, and fins

Infrastructure

West Bay Project

Throughout January our staff along with help from volunteers has worked hard on the construction and installation of the swim zones in West Bay. To date, we have established three swim areas, the first comprising of a 300ft line that stretches from the shore to the reef just west of the dock at Infinity Bay. The second swim zone encompasses the area east of Infinity Bay's dock up to the road leading to the beach by Banana Rama. The third swim zone is from the road by Banana Rama to The Beach Club between Mayan Princess and La Sirena. There is one final swim area yet to be installed, which will replace the current line of buoys in front of Henry Morgan's and will encompass the water adjacent to Mayan Princess and Henry Morgan's.



Map of West Bay indicating location of swim zones



Marker buoy from the swim area indicating the boat channel

Several people have questioned the presence of dive boats within the swim zones. The purpose of the swim areas is to both provide a safe environment for swimmers while they are within the swim zone, and establish distinct channels between the zones that allow beach access for water taxis, fishing boats, banana boats etc. Since Dive boat customers need to carry tanks, dive gear, O² boxes, etc. and require more time for boarding, allowing clear access onto the beach is important and prevents congestion with other boats in the channels. If the dive boats were forced to share the same channel as the taxis, there would be overcrowding on the shoreline, as well as an increased chance of people being hurt as boats come to shore and unload divers and passengers. In addition dive boats leave only three or four

times a day, while water taxis, and banana boats are often leaving and arriving more frequently. For these reasons we have allowed dive boats to cautiously enter swim zones.

Even with the new infrastructure installed, it is still necessary to patrol the area and ensure people abide by the regulations. A swim area can only be effective if there is someone there to enforce that boats remain outside the area. Currently the RMP is unable to dedicate a member of staff to patrol West Bay during cruise ship days however, we hope in the future that the West Bay Business Association can employ the services of the Municipal Police to ensure users are abiding by the regulations.



Dive boats and jet skis within the swim zone

Renovated channel markers



Solar beacon used to mark channels

With over ten main channels within the Reserve, it is a costly process to adequately mark these channels with pipes or buoys. In addition to the channel markers, solar beacons or reflective tape are attached to the markers for safe passage at night. While the channel at Half Moon Bay has had a solar beacon on the buoy for years, the remaining channels only have reflective tape. Ron Avery from Villas del Playa kindly donated two solar beacons which were installed at two channels in West End. The first is in front of Luna Beach Resort while the other is opposite the Blue Marlin restaurant and bar. While three channels in West End are now sufficiently lit for safe travel at night, there are more channels within the Reserve and we are always looking for people to sponsor a beacon.

Education

Childrens Palace

In January we were fortunate enough to meet with one of the teachers from Children’s Palace in French Harbor so we could plan visits to the school in the months to come. Our plan will follow a similar path to that of Punta Gorda, by educating older kids not only on why it’s important to take care of our environment, but also on effective teaching techniques. This program aims to make educators out of the older kids who in turn can give presentations to children at other schools. We look forward to continuing this program in the following months and involving more schools.



Kids from previous visits to Children’s Palace

ESBIR



The kids from ESBIR displaying their bags

Once again we have returned to ESBIR, where we presented to the children in the 2nd and 3rd grade. One of our primary objectives of these visits focused on explaining what happens to trash when it enters the seas and why it’s important to use recyclable bags. In an effort to help solidify this concept and make the kids feel involved in the lesson and proud to use their “Bags for Life,” the children personally decorated each of their bags with their favorite marine creatures. It appears that for many of them, the turtle was their favorite marine animal, followed closely by jellyfish, which are perhaps just easier to draw.

Meetings and Workshop

Shark Legacy Project



Identified female shark with hook damage to her right jaw

The Shark legacy Project was created out of an interest in preserving sharks. Peter Wilcox (PADI course director) and Giacomo Palavicini (Shark Biologist) have worked together towards this goal by creating a shark specialty course through PADI, a research program. The concept of the project is based on the idea that the lifetime monetary potential of keeping a shark alive far exceeds its one-time value as a food source in the marketplace. The goals of this project are then to obtain an estimate of population size and thus the individual dollar value for the Caribbean Reef Shark (*Carcharhinus perezi*). This research is being done under the umbrella and support of the RMP and DIGEPESCA.

To aid in their ongoing research, they are identifying individuals through dorsal photo ID and markings. This information will help us to have a better understanding of the Reef Shark population and drum up the support that is necessary to create a shark sanctuary for this species of sharks. To find out more on the project and up coming events, please join the [Shark Legacy](#) facebook page.



Identifiable female shark with birth mark

Inspections

Inspection around Roatan

The RMP attended several inspections this month, the first involving the erection of 6 pylons installed without authorization in the middle of the channel inside the lagoon in Dixon Cove on the back of the cays. The purpose of these pylons was to allow for yachts to tie to. The pylons are still present, but the Municipality intends to remove these in the near future.

Inspections also took place at the Mahogany Bay Cruise Terminal and the site where the Island Petroleum is going to be built in French Cay.



Illegally constructed pylons in Dixon Cove

Public Awareness

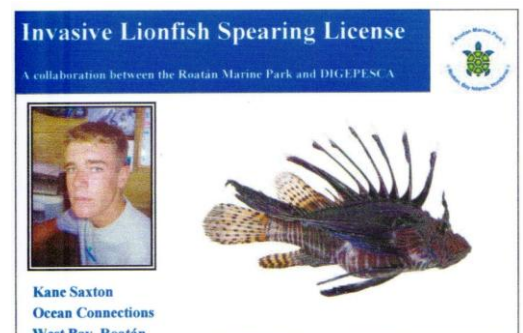
Controlling the lionfish on Roatan



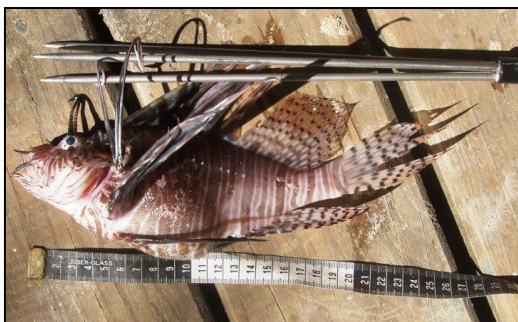
A 2 1/2" pole spear with paralyze barbs, used for hunting the lionfish on Roatan

the agreed upon rules between the two agencies. With this news, we began distributing Hawaiian Sling style spears to dive shops willing to participate in the program.

To participate in this program, dive shops must meet a number of requirements. First, shops are required to record the dive sites and depths at which the lionfish a captured or seen, as well as the person at the shop responsible for the sighting or capture. Secondly, we require program participants to attend a workshop which discusses the rules and regulations of the program as well as instructions on how to safely use the spear to both prevent personal injury as well as avoid damage to the reef. Those who attend are photographed and issued licenses. In addition, dive shops are given a flyer to hang in their shop, which explains the Invasive Lionfish Control Program and provides basic information on lionfish ecology that can be used to inform customers of their threats to the natural ecosystem. The RMP is looking to expand this program beyond dive shops and is considering an "adopt a reef" program for other business owners and concerned citizens who would like to help out with this program. If you would like to be considered for this, please contact us.



January's top hunter from Ocean Connection's W.B.



Coconut Tree's Marco Alvarado's winning fish at 20.4g

Largely due to the distribution of the Hawaiian Slings, January has by far been our most successful month of lionfish culling. We calculate success by comparing the number of lionfish sightings to those of confirmed kills. This month saw 161 recorded sightings of which 123 were captured or killed giving us a 76% success rate. We do understand that in reality there have certainly been many more sightings and kills than we receive reports for, but our information can only be based on reports we receive from each shop and from individuals in the community.

The top 3 participants who this month had the most kills were Ocean Connections West Bay (26), Native Sons (19) and West End Divers (17). The RMP had a modest 29 but wasn't included. Additionally we want to recognize Marco Alvarado from Coconut Tree Divers who caught the biggest lionfish to date this month which weighed in at 204 grams. A special thanks to all of you, we certainly couldn't do it without the help of the community.

Community Development

Progress with the Recycling Micro business



The RMP has continued its support of the establishment of the Recycling micro business, assisting in the election of its first board members. While the project has been in making for almost over a year, we feel that we are drawing that much closer to commencing. The photo on the left shows a board member signing a letter to the bank, to acquire a bank account for the Recycling Micro Business Association.



Board members of the recycling micro business

Daily beach cleanups



Workers collecting trash from the shore

Dirty beaches are a consistent problem on Roatan and trying to keep them clean is a never-ending task. Due to the currents and winds coming from the East, trash accumulates in high densities between Los Fuertes and Barefoot Cay. The trash that accumulates here comes not only from the communities of Los Fuertes, and French Harbour, but also from other towns on the island, in addition to the open sea. This waste is collected every day and



Truck loads of trash being removed

is sorted between plastics, glass, metals, and organic waste (woods, tires, chairs, etc.) After it is sorted, it is then taken to the municipal dump. This program is made possible with the support of the RMP and Barefoot Cay who are employing people to clean that site every day.

Wrapping things up



Cruise ship stand success

January was a very successful month for the RMP in regards to revenue generated from the cruise ship stands at Mahogany Bay and Port of Roatan. With the past few months being so slow, it was a nice surprise to actually begin depositing money in the bank rather than continuously withdrawing. We hope the next few months will be as successful, allowing us continue as well as developing new projects.



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We have a **Facebook** page which we post a host of relevant links and photos. Stop by, check it out, and become our fan to receive updates and invites. So far we have over 1,640 fans. Recommend us to your friends and let's break that 1,700 mark!

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